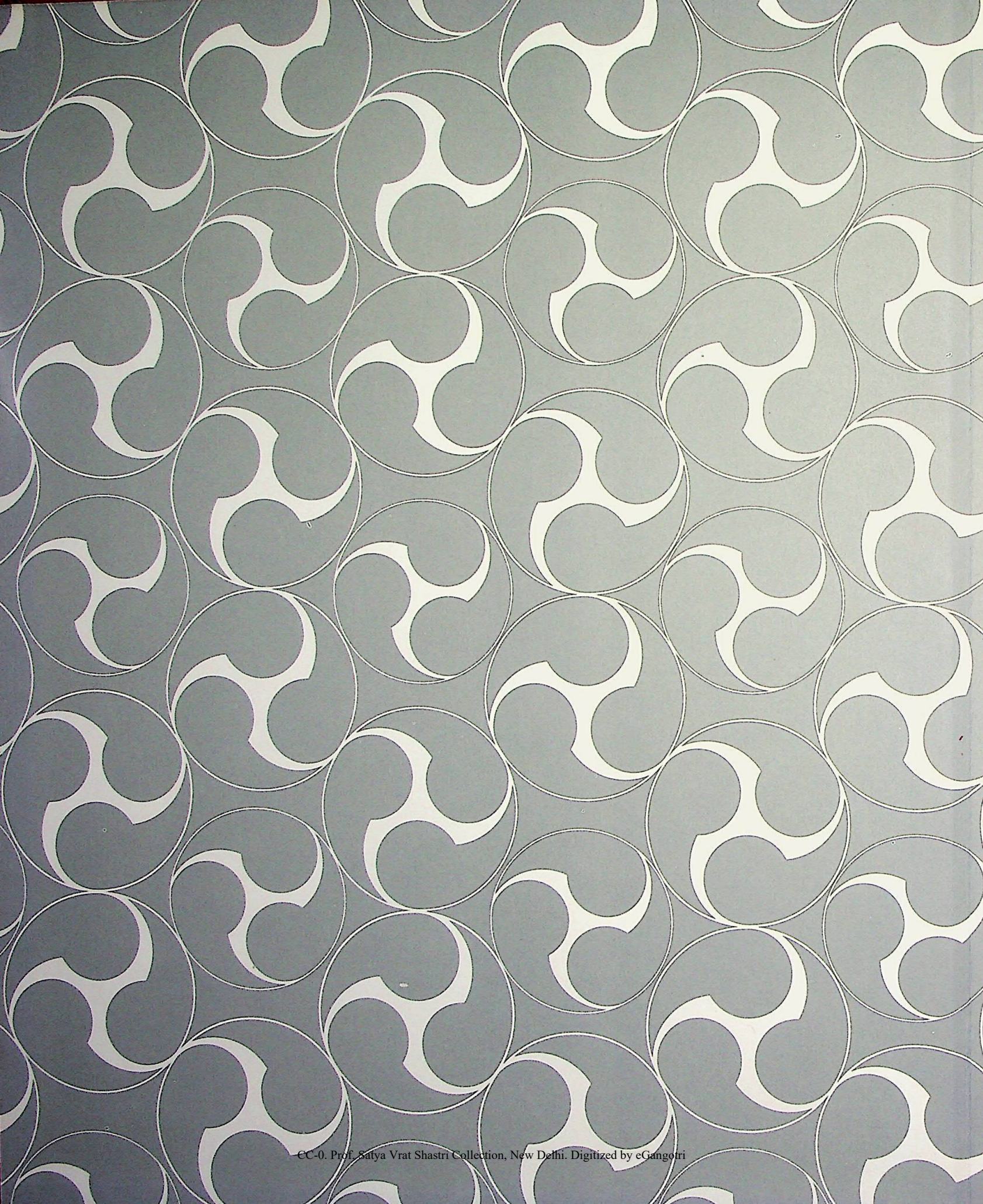










The Hamlyn History
of the World in Colour
Volume Eleven

THE NEW EUROPE



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Introduction

By GEOFFREY BARRACLOUGH

Some readers may think the title of this volume paradoxical and provocative. The seventeenth century has not usually been regarded as the time of the foundation of modern Europe. Most standard histories still trace the dawn of a new era back to the centuries between 1250 and 1450 and place the beginning of modern history in the period between 1453, the fall of Constantinople, and 1492, the date of Columbus' first voyage to the New World. The French invasion of Italy in 1494 has long been treated as the conventional division between medieval and modern Europe.

The present series, with good reason, follows a different plan. All divisions of history into periods are to some extent artificial and approximate; but historical research has cast increasing doubt on the adequacy of the traditional division. It is not only that it exaggerates the extent of the break in continuity at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: it also does less than justice to the fundamental changes in intellectual, moral and political climate which came later, in the seventeenth century.

Today, we are more aware of the threads which bound the Renaissance to the humanism of the later Middle Ages and of the degree to which it was embedded in the past, less inclined to see it as a sudden, splendid, revolutionary 'discovery of the world and man.' As to the Reformation, the tendency today—after a period in which historians emphasised almost exclusively its social and political implications—is to give due weight once again to its primary religious and theological motivations. As the author of this volume rightly states, 'it laid stress on faith rather than on learning and reason,' and like earlier schisms—for the idea that the Reformation was more than a temporary schism only gradually took hold between 1521 and 1555—it was really a conflict within the single undivided body of Christendom. The characteristically modern conception of Europe, as distinct from western Christendom, only became common currency in the seventeenth century.

From the point of view of world history, the outstanding development of the whole period from 1500 to 1700 was the expansion of Europe. Until 1500 man had lived in regional isolation, and Europe had been hemmed in, isolated and vulnerable, by the civilisation of Islam, the great Muslim empires and the conquerors from the steppes

of Asia. After 1500 the process was reversed and Europe began to press out on the world with a new momentum, which continued unabated right down to 1947. This great shift in world power and economic strength is dealt with, for reasons of convenience, in other volumes of this series. But it goes without saying that the changes in Europe's position in the world which it portended, underlie the story unfolded here. And it is important to realise that colonial expansion, with all its accompanying effects, was far more a phenomenon of the seventeenth than it was of the sixteenth century.

Traditionally we date the expansion of Europe from the voyages of Columbus in 1492 and Vasco da Gama in 1497, and it is true that the Spanish conquistadores laid the foundations of a great colonial empire in South and Central America between 1520 and 1550, though they destroyed Aztec civilisation in the process. But it was in the seventeenth century that voyages of discovery and trading and sheer exploitation gave way to colonisation in the true sense of the word, and the Dutch, French and British empires were established. The foundation of Virginia in 1607 (earlier attempts at colonisation had failed) and of Massachusetts in 1620, of Acadia (or Nova Scotia) and Quebec in 1605 and 1608, and of New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island in 1612, marked the beginning of a new stage in European and world history.

Parallel with the colonisation of the New World was the great movement of Russian expansion across Siberia. One band of Russians reached the Arctic coast in 1645; two years later another reached the shores of the Pacific; and the first stage of Russian expansion in Asia was formally completed by the Treaty of Nerchinsk between Russia and China in 1689. Taken together, these different waves of expansion, eastwards and westwards, were the most important developments of the seventeenth century in the longer perspective of world history. They are also important in a shorter and more narrowly European perspective. The new knowledge of the world which resulted—of the old world as well as the new—and the widening of horizons consequent upon contact with the ancient civilisations of China and the Indies profoundly affected the seventeenth-century European's view of the world, and his attitude to himself and his past. In particular, the irreconcilability of

the new knowledge with biblical tradition prepared the way for a new, secular view of world history. This was evident from about 1655, when the French Calvinist Isaac de la Peyrère found it impossible to reconcile Chinese history with the story of Adam and Eve, and the Dutch historian Hornius composed the first truly universal history, which included both China and pre-Columbian America.

This change in men's attitude to history, and the secularisation of thought which it illustrates, is only one example of a more far-reaching transformation which is usually described as the 'scientific revolution' of the seventeenth century. This revolution, which extended far beyond the limits of natural science and affected the whole intellectual atmosphere of Europeans after about 1680, is discussed at length in Dr Smith's sixth chapter and there is no need for me to repeat what he says. All that is necessary is to emphasise the central importance of this great turning-point in the history of European thought and civilisation. The age of Newton saw the emergence of most of the characteristic attitudes of the modern mind. Far more than the Renaissance it marked (in Dr Smith's words) 'the dividing line between 'medieval' and 'modern', and that is the reason, above all others, why historians today pick out the seventeenth century as the time of 'the foundation of modern Europe.'

The great transformation of European life and attitudes came relatively late in the century. Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* is often acclaimed as the first enunciation of the modern theory of sovereignty, but two of its four books deal specifically with the Christian Commonwealth and with the Kingdom of Darkness. Hobbes, atheist though he is said to have been, was firmly anchored in the old world of religion and demonology. But with a writer like Locke, whose second *Treatise on Government* appeared in 1689, we are in another, firmly secular and pragmatic environment. The years between 1651, when *Leviathan* was published, and 1689 are the great watershed. Historians have spilt a great deal of ink trying to probe the causes of the change. We shall probably never know exactly the answer. But one thing that is certain is that Europe underwent a great crisis and testing-time in the 1640s and 1650s, and when it emerged its character and temper, as well as

its political structure, were different.

This crisis, as it affected England, Holland, France and Spain, comprises a good deal of the story told in this volume. The political and military history is the necessary background for understanding the social and intellectual changes. It is also of importance in its own right. Here also the seventeenth century saw a process of modernisation, both in the internal structure of government and in the balance of political forces, which marks a major advance towards the Europe we know.

In part at least, this process of modernisation was the consequence of a military revolution, associated with the name of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, the significance of which extended far beyond the purely military sphere. This was a period when the demands of finance, recruitment and equipment for ever growing armies forced governments to interfere increasingly in the lives of their subjects. 'Just as the modern state was needed to create the standing army,' one writer has said, 'so the army created the modern state.' The little principality of Brandenburg, for example, increased its military forces from 900 to 80,000 men within a hundred years, and though Brandenburg was in some respects exceptional, a similar process was taking place through the length and breadth of continental Europe.

As a result of the exigencies of war, in other words, modern administrations began visibly to take shape. A second result of the wars of the seventeenth century was the re-drawing of the political map of Europe on lines familiar to us all. At the beginning of the seventeenth century that was not the case. Spain was still the dominant power in Europe, Holland its greatest financial and commercial centre, Poland a force to be reckoned with in the east; and in the north it looked as though Sweden was in the process of carving out a mighty empire on the Baltic. How different the map of Europe would have been, how strangely changed its destinies, if the possibilities inherent in this constellation of forces had been realised! By the end of the seventeenth century it was obvious that they would not be. Germany and Italy, it is true, were still 'geographical expressions,' though their future outlines were reasonably clear. But the circle of Great Powers was closing. Brandenburg under the Great Elector (1640-88) had taken

the first steps which later—though no one could have foreseen it at the time—were to make it the nucleus of a new German empire. Austria, having driven back the Turks from the very gates of Vienna, assumed the position in south-east Europe which it was destined to retain until 1918. And Russia, emerging from its 'time of troubles', became an integral part of the Concert of Europe.

By the time of the peace of Utrecht in 1713 the European balance of power, the framework of European politics and international relations for the next two centuries, was in existence. The foundations of modern Europe had been laid. It is surprising how firm they remained, withstanding the shocks of the French Revolution and of the Industrial Revolution, until that fateful day in 1914 when the old Europe went into the melting-pot. Today, after the shattering experience of two world wars, we have passed into a new age, a post-European age of global politics, when Europe is faced by a resurgent Asia and Africa and dwarfed by the two great super-powers on its flanks. The old Europe, whose beginnings in the seventeenth century this volume traces, is no more; but that is another story, which it would require another volume to tell.

ENGLAND, THE UNITED PROVINCES AND RUSSIA DURING THE XVII CENTURY

England	United Provinces	Russia
1600		
James I (1603-25)	Truce with Spain (1609)	Tsar Michael Romanov (1613-45)
Gunpowder Plot (1605)	Oldenbarneveldt executed (1619)	
Charles I (1625-49)	End of truce with Spain (1621)	Treaty with Poland (1634)
	Frederick Henry, prince of Orange and stadtholder (1625)	
War with Scotland (1639)	Capture of Breda (1637)	
Long Parliament (1640)	Marriage of William II of Orange and Mary Stuart (1641)	
Execution of Strafford (1641)		
Civil War begins (1642)		
Laud executed (1645)		Tsar Alexis (1645-76)
Battle of Naseby (1645)	Succession of William II of Orange (1647)	
Execution of Charles I (1649)	Treaty of Munster (1648)	Code of Laws (1649)
1650		
Charles II defeated at the battle of Worcester; goes into exile (1651)	Death of William II; birth of William III (1650)	
Cromwell lord protector (1653)	Anglo-Dutch War (1652)	
Death of Cromwell (1658)	John de Witt grand pensionary (1653)	War with Poland (1654)
Restoration of Charles II (1660)	Treaty of Paris (1662)	
Act of Uniformity (1662)	Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665)	
Conventicle Act (1664)		
Great Plague (1665)	Treaty of Breda (1667)	Russian Church council (1666-7)
Fire of London (1666)	Triple Alliance (1668)	
Treaty of Dover (1670)	Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672)	Peasant's revolt (1670-1)
	Invasion by French (1672)	
	Murder of de Witt brothers (1672)	
	William of Orange hereditary stadtholder (1674)	
Popish Plot (1678)	Mary Stuart marries William III (1677)	Tsar Fedor (1676-82)
1680		
Accession of James II (1685)	League of Augsburg (1686)	Tsar Peter the Great (1682-1725)
Landing of William III (1688)		Revolt of the <i>Streltsy</i> (1682)
Declaration of Rights: William and Mary, king and queen (1689)		
Battle of the Boyne (1690)		
Triennial Act (1694)		
Act of Settlement (1701)	First Partition Treaty (1698)	Building of Russian fleet (1696)
Accession of Anne (1702)	Alliance with Holy Roman Empire against France (1701)	Capture of Azov (1696)
Act of Union with Scotland (1707)	Suspension of stadtholderate (1702)	Massacre of the <i>Streltsy</i> (1698)
		War with Sweden (1700)
Accession of George I (1714)	Peace of Utrecht (1713)	Defeat at Narva (1700)
Accession of George II (1727)		Founding of St Petersburg (1703)
		Victory at Poltava (1709)
		Peace of Pruth (1711)
		Execution of Tsarevich Alexis (1718)
		Peace of Nystadt (1721)
		Death of Peter the Great (1725)
1730		



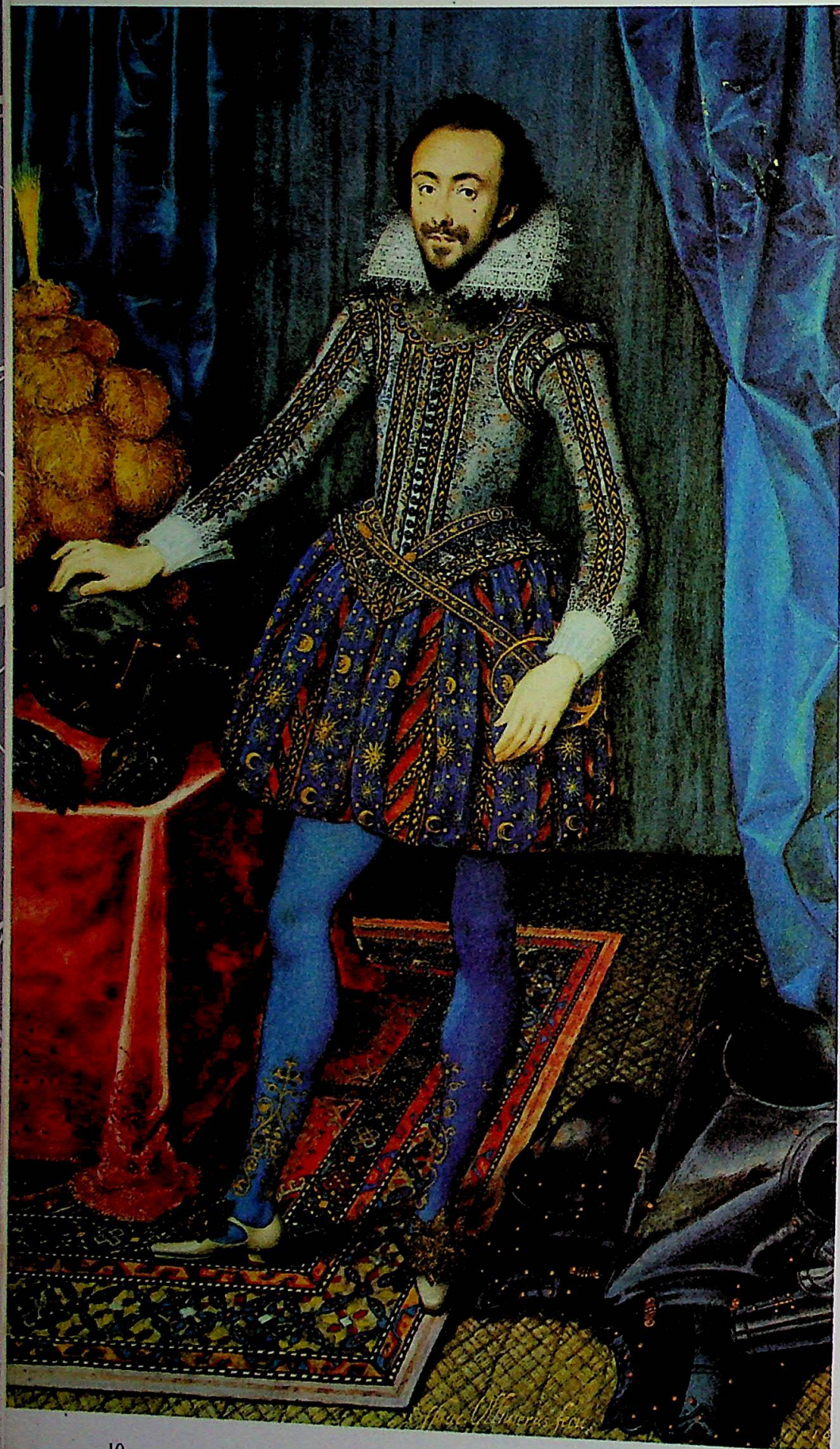
Seventeenth-century England

The Stuarts ascend the throne of England; conflict between crown and parliament; Charles I rules alone; civil war in England; the killing of a king; Cromwell and the English republic; Charles II—a pensioner of the king of France; the last Stuart monarch flees into exile.

In March 1603, on the death of Queen Elizabeth, King James VI of Scotland became James I of England as well. When he travelled southwards the following month he received a rapturous reception from his new subjects. Their enthusiasm was, to some extent, a commentary on the last years of Elizabeth's reign. As the seventeenth century progressed people looked back on the

Elizabethan era as a golden age, but in 1603 there was considerable discontent in England. The last decade of the sixteenth century brought difficulties for the country. These included the war with Spain—which had begun in 1585—financial problems, the Crown's relations with parliament, increasing corruption in the administration, and the social distress which accompanied a series

Above: the Somerset House conference which arranged the peace treaty of 1604 between Spain and England. The Spanish delegation is on the left, the English, with Robert Cecil in front, on the right. (National Portrait Gallery, London.)



Far right: James I, wearing the collar of the order of the Garter. (National Portrait Gallery, London.)

On the left: Richard Sackville, second earl of Dorset. His father, Thomas, the first earl, was Lord Treasurer of England from 1599 to 1608. He himself was a privy councillor and chamberlain to James's Queen, Anne of Denmark. (Victoria and Albert Museum, London.)

Below: the Gunpowder conspirators, who tried to blow up parliament in 1605. (National Portrait Gallery, London.)

of bad harvests in the mid fifteen-nineties. In this situation the queen and her chief minister, Lord Burghley, an ageing conservative whose policies had served the country well in the early years of the reign, had no new ideas to offer to meet changing conditions. As a result, at the time of Elizabeth's death her popularity was perhaps at its lowest level of the entire reign.

James, therefore, ascended the throne amidst great goodwill. No section of the community had higher expectations of the new monarch than the Catholics, who had



been subjected to intermittent persecution during Elizabeth's reign. James at first held out hopes of a relaxation of the severe Elizabethan penal laws, which threatened their property and even their lives, but as a result of the consequent rapid growth in the number of open Catholics he took alarm and the policy of persecution was resumed.

Some of the bolder spirits among the Catholics, led by Robert Catesby, a Warwickshire square, and Guido Fawkes, an Englishman who had served in the Spanish armies, resorted in despair to the Gunpowder Plot, a scheme to blow up King, Lords and Commons at the opening of Parliament on the 5 November 1605.

The conspirators leased a cellar under the Parliament House and placed in it twenty barrels of gunpowder with a number of iron bars on top to make the blast more destructive. The government, however, got wind of the plot, the cellar was searched, and the ringleaders were killed or executed. In 1606, in the ensuing anti-Catholic hysteria, Parliament passed two further penal statutes and Catholics continued to be persecuted throughout the early Stuart period.

James's initial reluctance to persecute his

Catholic subjects reflected to a considerable extent, his genuine hatred of violence, an admirable personal quality which extended to an intense dislike of wars. He was determined to bring the conflict with Spain to a speedy end. This was done in August 1604. The terms of the treaty, which was concluded after negotiations in London, reflected the stalemate which prevailed in the war. James gave little away, standing his ground on all points at issue between the two countries, especially England's claims to trading rights in the New World.

The end of the war and the vast expenses which accompanied it, together with the better harvests of the first decade of the seventeenth century and James's initial popularity augured well for a successful reign. Unfortunately, however, there was another, much less happy side of the picture. As well as having good points, James had serious defects of character. He was lazy, he was extravagant, and he had exalted ideas of the divine right of kings which led to conflicts with parliament. James's laziness—he much preferred hunting to the hard work of routine government business—was redressed to some extent in the early years of



On the right: William Cecil, Lord Burghley, Queen Elizabeth's greatest minister. When he died in 1598 he had served the queen continuously for forty years, an unparalleled record.

On the far right: George Villiers, duke of Buckingham, favourite of James I and Charles I. He rose from being a simple gentleman to a dukedom under James, the first non-royal duke in England since the execution of the duke of Norfolk in 1572. (Both in the National Portrait Gallery, London.)

the reign by the diligence of his principal minister, Robert Cecil, who was created earl of Salisbury in 1605. As secretary of state and later as lord treasurer as well, Salisbury toiled away endlessly over his papers while the king hunted and feasted.

James's extravagance had more immediately serious effects. Elizabeth had left a debt of perhaps £350,000. James, who scattered money lavishly among the Scottish favourites who accompanied him to England and spent far more on the royal household than Elizabeth had ever done, soon increased this. By 1608, the year Salisbury became Lord Treasurer, it stood at perhaps £600,000. Salisbury managed to reduce this to under £300,000 by 1610, but there was still a large deficit on the annual budget—well over £100,000.

In these circumstances Salisbury supported the Great Contract, a scheme which was discussed in parliament in 1610 and proposed the abandonment of certain antiquated royal prerogatives which were burdensome to the subject in return for a fixed annual compensation of £200,000. The scheme was eventually abandoned because of mutual suspicion between Crown and Commons. It has been argued that, if it had gone through, it might have given the Crown virtual financial independence of parliament. This is speculation—we can only guess what James would have done with the money. One thing is certain. The failure of the Contract marked the end of Salisbury's political power. He remained in office until his death in 1612, but the king had lost his former confidence in the man who had been the principal protagonist of the Contract which failed.

King and Commons clash

In 1611 James dissolved his first parliament. His bitter words to Salisbury about it reflected his disillusionment both with the House of Commons and with his principal minister. 'Your greatest error', he wrote, 'has been that you ever expected to draw honey out of gall, being a little blinded with the self-love of your own counsel in holding together of this parliament, whereof all men were despaired, as I have often told you, but yourself alone.'

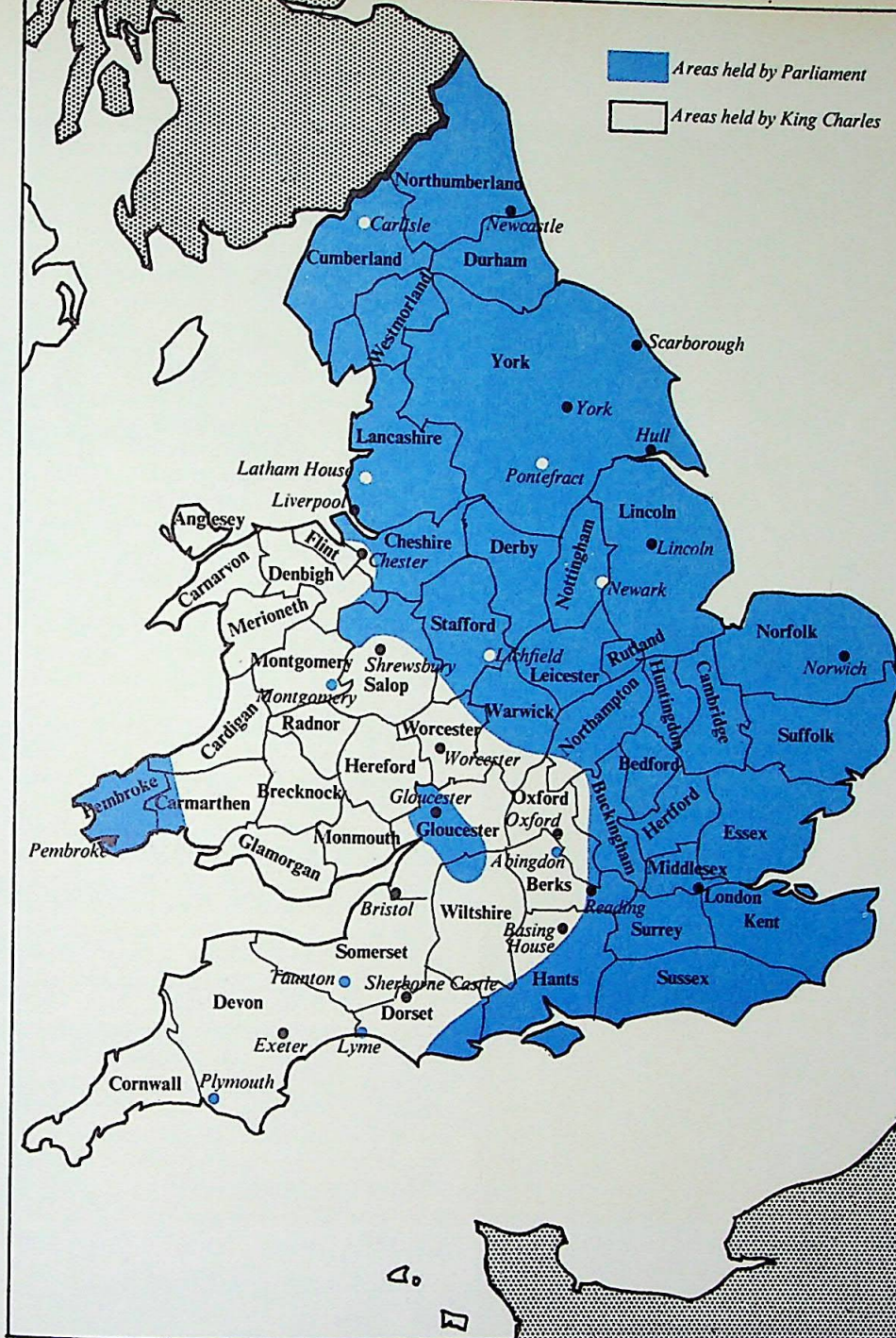


The clashes between Crown and Commons in the parliament of 1604-11—there were many other disputes besides that over the Contract—showed very clearly that already in the first decade of the seventeenth century there were important differences between the Crown and the House of Commons, which was comprised mainly of representatives of the gentry class. At that time the overwhelming majority of the peers were loyal supporters of the king and the government, but with James I's and Charles I's lavish additions to the peerage between 1615 and 1628, when the number of English peers rose from eighty-one to a hundred and twenty-six, a split developed within the ranks of the aristocracy. Many members of the older peerage despised the new 'upstarts', and in the parliaments of the sixteen-twenties there was a significant opposition group to the Crown in the Lords as well as in the Commons.

The peerage and gentry taken together

formed the English political community and the Crown depended on their general co-operation and goodwill for the successful running of the country. There were several reasons why that co-operation was very clearly breaking down in the second and third decades of the seventeenth century.

One of the most important was the increasing gap between the 'Court', that is, the king and his entourage, and the 'Country', those members of the aristocracy and gentry who had no access to the profits of office or the largesse which James I distributed so freely to his chosen favourites, like the worthless Robert Carr, created earl of Somerset, on whom the king showered gifts and honours between 1611 and 1615. Somerset was disgraced in 1616 following disclosures of his complicity in a sordid murder, but he was soon replaced by a new favourite, George Villiers, created duke of Buckingham in 1623, who was the dominant influence in the kingdom from 1618 until



1628. Under the regimes of Carr and Buckingham corruption at court and in the administration became a scandal, with offices and honours being openly sold in the interest of the favourites.

Those noblemen and gentlemen outside the charmed circle of the court, and some within it, looked on the situation with growing distaste. By 1628 the position of Buckingham, who was as secure in the friendship of Charles I as he had been in the affections of James I, had become one of the greatest grievances in the kingdom, a leading obstacle to the improvement of relations between the king and his subjects. He was not, however, by any means the only obstacle, as clashes between Crown and Commons in 1629, the year after Buckingham's assassination, were to show very plainly.

England and Wales in 1644 showing the areas held by the Royalists and Parliamentarians respectively. The battles of the first two years of the Civil War, when the king's forces were generally superior in quality, proved indecisive. However, in July 1644 Oliver Cromwell inflicted a crushing defeat on the Royalist army in the north at Marston Moor, which was to be a turning-point in the war.

Another source of conflict was the continuing financial needs of the Crown, especially after the outbreak of war with Spain in 1624, a conflict which lasted until 1630. The parliaments of 1624 and 1625 voted some money—though not nearly enough—for the prosecution of the war, but

in 1626 the Commons refused to consider any supply until their grievances had been redressed. They proceeded with a formal impeachment of the duke of Buckingham and Charles had to dissolve parliament to prevent the continuation of attacks on his favourite. As no money had been forthcoming for the war effort he then had recourse to a forced loan, which caused widespread resentment. Some gentlemen refused to pay and were imprisoned. Their appeal to the courts was turned down in 1627 when the King's Bench upheld Charles's view that he had the right to imprison men without showing specific cause. This decision, together with unparliamentary taxation, was attacked in the Petition of Right, a statement of the liberties of the subject drawn up by the House of Commons in 1628.

Charles grudgingly agreed to the Petition though he made it quite plain that he interpreted it as merely confirming existing liberties (as he understood them) and not creating new ones. By 1628, therefore, the war and the growing financial problems which attended it had led to serious disputes and great ill-feeling between Crown and Commons.

Charles's religious ideas also provoked



Above: King Charles I (Musée du Louvre, Paris) and (top) a Van Dyck portrait of his children. (National Portrait Gallery, London.)

On the right: the front page of a political pamphlet of the early years of the Long Parliament. (British Museum, London.)

trouble with many of his subjects and that trouble too was reflected in the parliaments of the sixteen-twenties. He supported the Arminian party within the Church, a group led by William Laud, who was made bishop of London in 1628 and archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. Laud and his followers stressed the freedom of men's wills as opposed to the Anglican Church's traditional emphasis on predestination—the idea that God determined each soul's destiny in advance and that men were powerless to aid their salvation by their own efforts.

Many moderate Anglicans regarded Laud's theology with as much suspicion as the Puritan wing of the Church did, but it was the Puritans who took the lead in opposing not only Laud's theological ideas but also his changes in Church services, changes designed to restore some of the dignity and beauty of pre-Reformation ritual. To the Puritans some of his innovations, such as railing off the altar and his insistence on kneeling at communion, suggested the doctrine of the real presence in the sacrament—one of the very foundations of Catholicism. This explains the bitterness of their opposition, both inside and outside parliament. James I had already made life difficult enough for the Puritans, and in 1620 a large group of them had set sail in the *Mayflower* for America, where they hoped for freedom to practice their religion as they pleased. When in March 1629 parliament was adjourned amid excited scenes in the Commons, it was religious issues which raised the greatest passions in the hearts of members. They acclaimed a resolution asserting that anyone who proposed innovations in religion—a clear reference to Laud and his followers—should be considered 'a betrayer of the liberties of England and an enemy to the same'.

Charles rules alone

The crisis in the relationship between Crown and Commons in 1628-9 made Charles decide to rule without calling parliament. He carried out that plan for the next eleven years. The key to the whole situation during this period of 'personal' rule was the financial position of the Crown. Charles had to obtain sufficient money to administer the country without recourse to parliament. This meant keeping out of wars—peace was made with Spain in 1630—and exploiting the royal prerogative for financial ends. Ship money, the most important of the numerous fiscal devices of the personal rule, was imposed on the whole country from 1636 onwards. There were good precedents, going back to the sixteenth century, for raising this tax in coastal shires in times of national emergency. The money was used to equip fleets to defend these areas against possible attacks from abroad. Charles, however, argued that the whole country benefited, at least indirectly, from the protection

THE PROCTOR AND PARATOR their Mourning:

O R,
lamentation of the Doctors Commons
for their Downfall.

Being a true Dialogue,
ing the fearfull abuses and exorbitancies of those
ituall Courts, under the names of *Sponge*
the Proctor, and *Hunter* the Parator.



Printed in the yeare 1641.

this afforded, and that all counties should contribute to the tax. He also contended that he alone had the right to decide when an emergency existed. The judges upheld the king's views in Hampden's case (1637), but only by a majority of seven to five. Still, it looked as if Charles had obtained the right to impose a non-parliamentary tax which could easily become a regular levy.

Ship money and the other financial expedients which were employed did improve the royal revenue, which rose from about £600,000 a year at the beginning of the sixteen-thirties to about £900,000 a year at the end of the decade. Even this increase was not enough, however, to wipe out the large Crown debts, and Charles had to borrow more money to pay off these previous liabilities. In other words, his continuing solvency depended on his ability to obtain loans and it was very clear that any sudden large demand upon his purse—a war, for example—would necessitate the calling of parliament. Crisis point came for the king in 1638 when his Scottish subjects openly defied his authority.

The trouble in Scotland arose from Charles's and Laud's efforts to impose their religious ideas there. The climax came in 1637 when they tried to introduce a new prayer book, based on that of the Church of England. The Scots refused to accept this and at the beginning of 1638 the National Covenant, a document asserting Scotland's rights to its traditional religious and civil liberties was drawn up and signed by large numbers of Scotsmen. The king decided to coerce the Scots. It was a fateful decision, as it set in motion the train of events which led directly to civil war. It soon became clear that Charles did not have sufficient financial resources to impose his will in Scotland. In 1640, therefore, he was forced to call parliament. The first parliament which met that year, the Short Parliament, was dissolved hastily without voting the king any money. Its successor, the famous Long Parliament, which opened in November 1640, was one of the most important in English history.

At the beginning of the Long Parliament the king had little support in the House of Commons and in 1641 he had to agree to a series of measures which profoundly and, as it turned out, permanently modified the structure of the English state. The institutions of conciliar government created during the Tudor period, notably the courts of Star Chamber and High Commission and the other prerogative courts, upon which James I and Charles I had depended for the enforcement of their policies, were swept away.

The death of Strafford

The Commons also succeeded in 1641 in disposing of Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford, the king's ablest minister, who was condemned to death by act of attainder and executed in May. Charles never forgave

himself for consenting to Strafford's death and there is no doubt that the earl's abilities would have been of the greatest use to the king in the years ahead. The Commons, however, were determined that he should die. They feared that otherwise he might succeed in enforcing the royal will in England with the same ruthlessness which he had shown during his rule in Ireland, where he had represented the king as lord deputy during the sixteen-thirties.

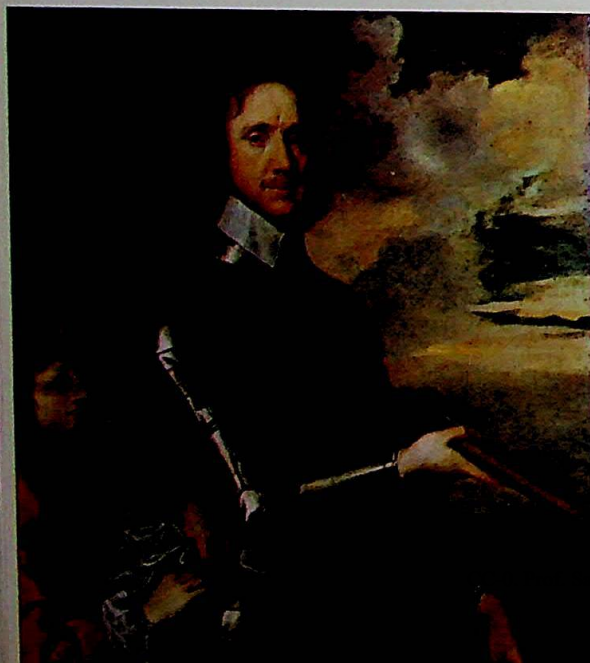
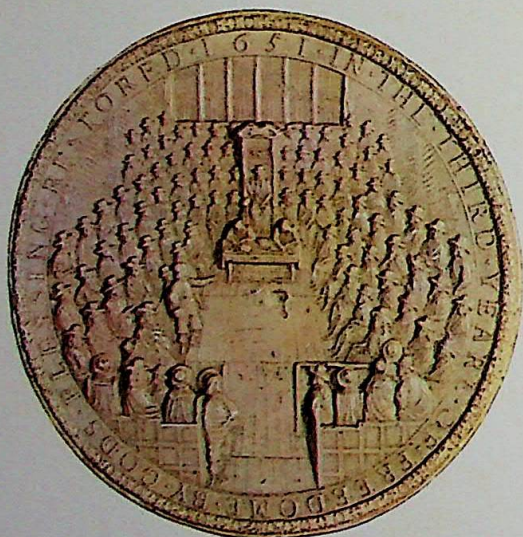
Events in Ireland contributed to the breakdown of the virtual unanimity which was a striking feature in the House of Commons during the early months of 1641. So did religious differences among M.P.s. The Commons were united in their desire to do away with Arminian practices—Laud was imprisoned in 1641—but some members wanted to go much further and abolish episcopacy altogether, 'root and branch'. This Puritan policy was abhorrent to many middle of the road Anglicans and it played a

large part in the reaction towards the king's side which was apparent by the autumn of 1641. That reaction can be seen very clearly in the voting on the Grand Remonstrance, a summary of parliament's previous grievances against the Crown and a statement of further measures necessary to satisfy their wishes. John Pym, the ablest of the parliamentary leaders and a supporter of the 'root and branch' policy, obtained a majority of only eleven votes (159-148) for this document when it was passed in November. Broadly speaking, those who voted for the Remonstrance wished for further radical changes in church and state, while those who voted against it were convinced that previous measures had been sufficient.

While the Remonstrance was being discussed news of a great Irish Catholic revolt against English authority reached London. Coming at such a time, this rebellion was a very important link in the chain of events leading to the outbreak of civil war in

England. It was obvious that an army would have to be raised to crush the revolt, but the Commons as a whole were not prepared to concede control of it to the king. They feared that it might be turned against themselves. The king, on the other hand, was not prepared to surrender his control of the armed forces, the very basis of the royal prerogative.

In January 1642 he tried personally to arrest five of his leading opponents in the House of Commons. They had been warned and had already fled and the king had to withdraw baffled. This attempted coup was very unwise. It lost Charles a good deal of the moderate support which he had gained by the end of 1642 and left a virtually unbridgeable gulf of fear and suspicion between him and his opponents. Soon afterwards he left London and during the early part of 1642 the country drifted towards civil war. General hostilities began in September.



A country torn by civil war

Few historical subjects have provoked more discussion or greater disagreement among historians than the causes of the English Civil War. Only one thing is certain: no one explanation or group of explanations is entirely satisfactory. The best interpretation of the origins of the war is probably one which takes the widest possible view of its causes. We will be considering the European revolutions of the time as a whole in a later chapter. Here it must be enough to note that the English revolution should be seen in a European as well as in a local context. Turning to England itself, a great deal of attention has recently been devoted to the social and economic background of the conflict. No generally accepted picture has emerged, but many historians see economic and social developments behind the obvious political fact that the leadership in the struggle against the Crown was taken by

the gentry and their lawyer allies rather than by the aristocracy. This, it can be argued, reflected a relative increase in the wealth and political maturity of those middling groups in society—principally the landed gentry—which were increasingly resentful of the Crown's exactions. These were the people who looked to the common law to defend their interests and who were finally prepared to risk an open conflict with the king.

Any comprehensive interpretation must also take into account the increasing division between the Laudian and Puritan parties in the Church in the years before the Civil War, the constitutional conflicts of the reigns of James I and Charles I, and the significance of the foreign policy of the first two Stuarts. Despite the wars of 1624–30, this was generally friendly towards Spain, still the arch-champion of militant Catholicism and as such anathema to most Englishmen.

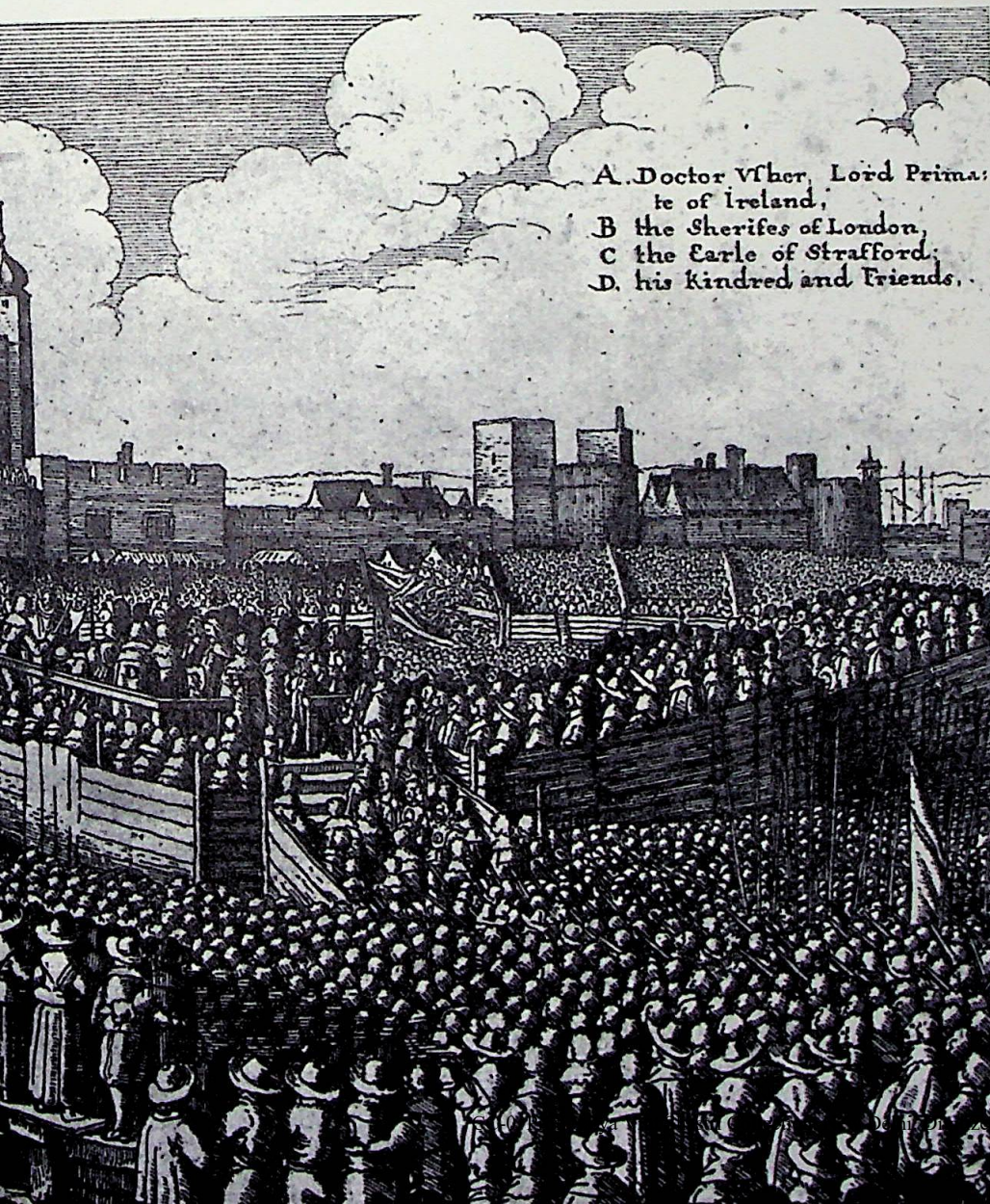
The First Civil War lasted from 1642

until 1646. It ended with the defeat of the king, and during its course Oliver Cromwell, who dominated English history in the sixteen-fifties, emerged as a significant figure on the political stage. When the struggle began—and now we are speaking in the broadest possible terms—Charles controlled the north and west, the poorer part of the country, while the richer southern and eastern regions of the kingdom supported parliament. The king had an initial superiority in the quality of his troops, notably of his cavalry, but he failed to exploit this effectively, and the parliamentarians, who concluded an alliance with the Scots in 1643, took the initiative from that year onwards. The royal forces in the north were defeated at Marston Moor in 1644 and the following year the king's own army in the midlands was beaten at Naseby. In 1646 Charles realised that further resistance was useless and surrendered to the Scots.

It was during the later stages of the war that Oliver Cromwell really made his mark. Cromwell, who came from East Anglian gentry stock, was an Independent in religion. As such he was one of a growing body of men who believed in the right of the congregation of each church to choose its own minister and worship in its own way. Cromwell's great contribution to parliament's victory in the war was as an organiser and trainer of cavalry. By its end he was second-in-command of the New Model Army, an efficient military force which had been organised in 1645 under the command of Sir Thomas Fairfax. Independency was very strong in the army, but it was much weaker in parliament, where both houses were dominated by Presbyterians who drew strength from their alliance with the Scots.

The king is beheaded

The two following years, 1646–8, were occupied by a series of tortuous intrigues in which the principal parties were Charles, the army, parliament and the Scots. The outcome was a Second Civil War, fought in 1648 between the Scots, who had allied with Charles, and the army. The Scots were soon defeated and the army leaders decided that they must get rid of Charles, the 'man of blood' whose intrigues had been responsible for the renewal of conflict. This provoked a direct clash with the Presbyterians in parliament, who had maintained an equivocal attitude during the Second Civil War, but had eventually reopened negotiations with

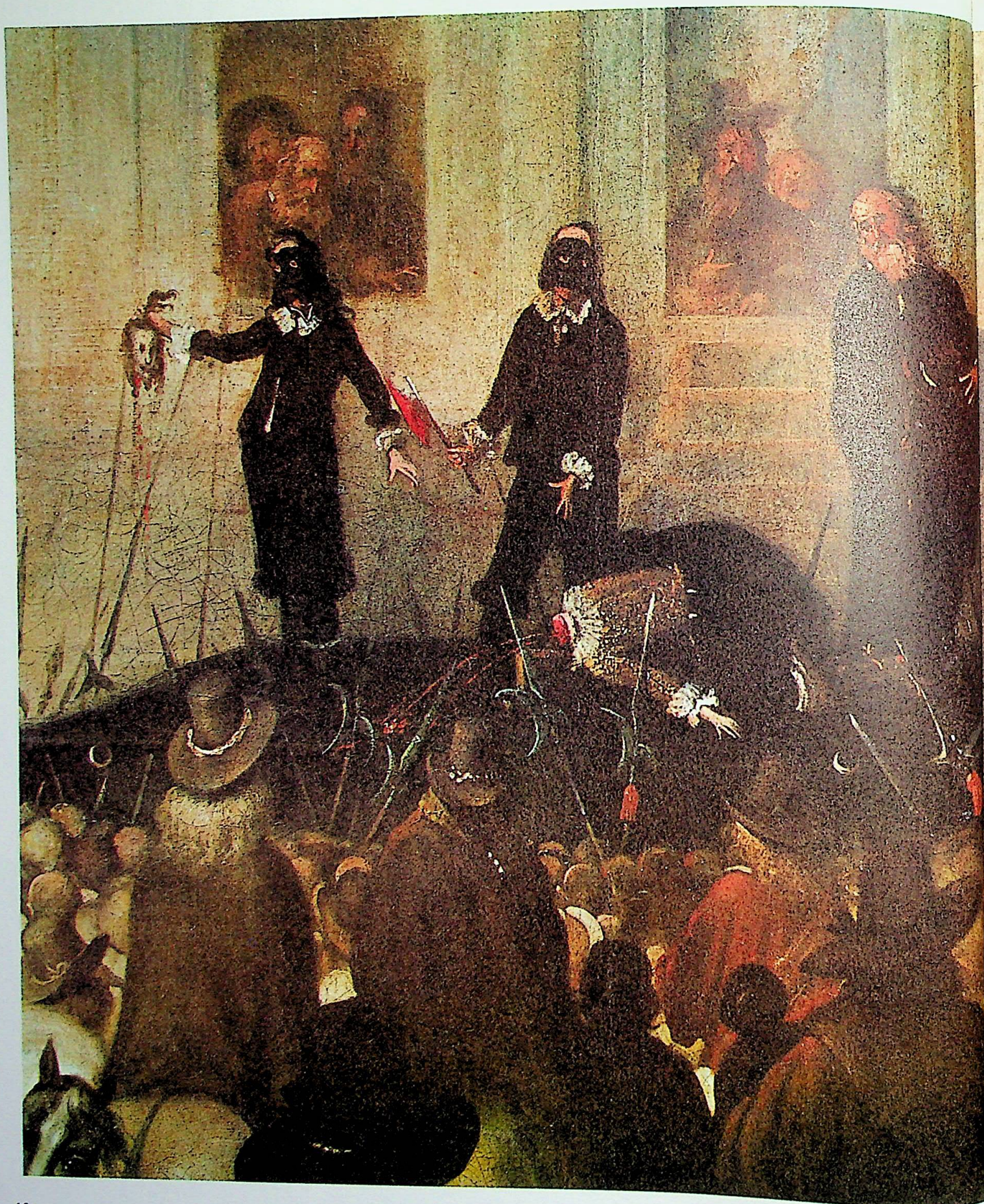


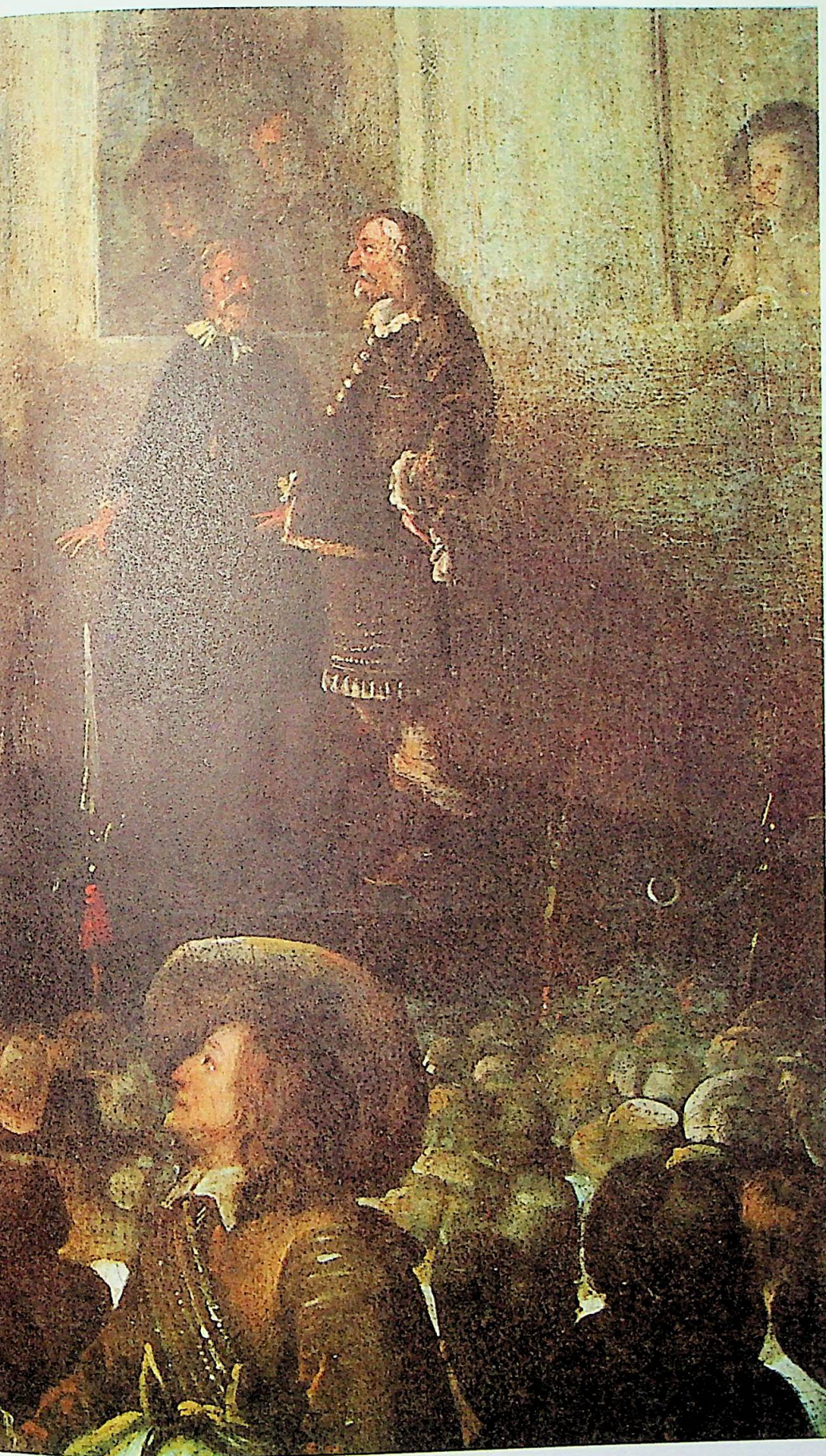
A. Doctor Vther, Lord Primate of Ireland;
B the Sherifes of London;
C the Earle of Strafford;
D. his Kindred and Friends.

Far left, above: the seal of the House of Commons at the time of the Commonwealth. (British Museum, London.)

Far left, below: Oliver Cromwell. (National Portrait Gallery, London.)

Left: the execution of Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford, in 1641. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)





the king. The army took drastic action. In December 1648, the Presbyterian M.P.s were excluded from the Commons and only some seventy members, army supporters, were allowed to remain. The purged parliament, in alliance with the army, set up a special court to try the king, who was executed in January 1649. Immediately afterwards the monarchy and the House of Lords were abolished.

It is easy to condemn Charles I's execution as a crime—there was, of course, no legal process by which a sovereign could be arraigned—but less easy to show what other solution was possible. Charles had many virtues both as a man and as a king. He was a faithful husband and a dutiful father. He was sincerely religious, and he worked hard at the routine business of kingship. Despite these admirable qualities, however, it can be argued that the most notable defect of his character—his total untrustworthiness—made his final execution necessary. Throughout the period 1642 to 1648 he played his opponents off against one another with a total lack of scruple, which he himself would have justified by arguing that he was entitled to use virtually any means available to preserve the monarchy and the Church of England. In these circumstances he inevitably alienated any goodwill which remained among his enemies.

Although, therefore, the king in some ways brought about his own death, the very fact of his execution was a heavy burden for the regicides to bear. In England itself many people were horrified at his death. An eyewitness records that after the execution 'there was such a groan by the thousands then present, as I never heard before'.

Abroad the reaction was almost universally hostile, and in the United Provinces and Spain envoys of the new government were murdered by the hostile populace.

This new government took the form of a Commonwealth, with the remaining members of the House of Commons, the Rump as it came to be called, as the supreme authority in the state. Between 1649 and 1651 Cromwell reconquered Ireland and once again defeated the Scots who intervened on behalf of Charles I's son, the future Charles II. These victories made Cromwell, now the acknowledged leader of the army, the most powerful man in the state, though on many issues he did not see eye to eye with the Rump. There were clashes over foreign policy—Cromwell was unhappy about the war between England and the United Provinces which broke out in 1652—over the slowness of the Rump in

The execution of Charles I in 1649. The executioner is holding the axe while his assistant shows the king's severed head to the onlookers. (Musée de Picardie, Amiens.)



reforming the country's archaic legal system, and, above all, over its determination to perpetuate its own existence. Cromwell and the army wanted a general election for a new parliament, but in April 1653 the Rump decided to have piecemeal by-elections with existing members keeping their seats. Cromwell then dissolved the Rump by force.

Between July and December 1653 he tried what was perhaps the most extraordinary constitutional experiment ever attempted in England, the Nominated parliament, sometimes called Barebones parliament, after Praise-God Barbon, a London tradesman who was one of the M.P.s for the City. Its members were not elected in the normal way. They were 'godly' men chosen by the leading army officers. The Nominated parliament therefore, reveals very clearly Cromwell's belief in the efficacy of religion in solving the problems of human society: he thought that if he collected a body of devout men they would soon put the state

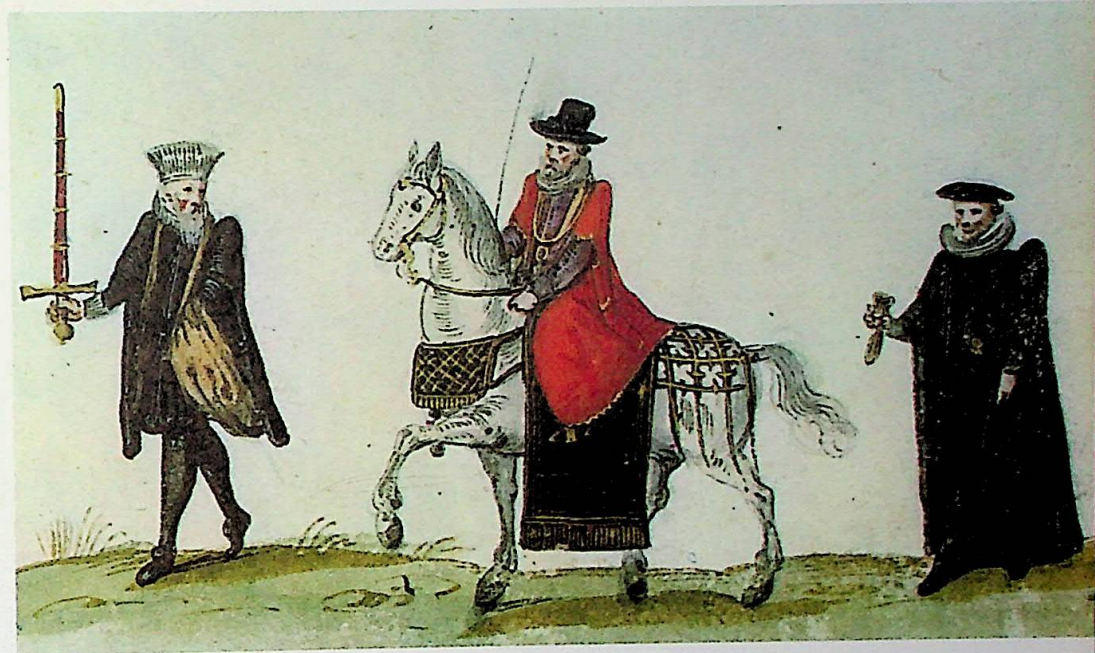
in order. He was disillusioned. The new parliament soon split into moderate and radical wings, with the radicals pressing for the abolition of tithes and for sweeping law reforms. The alarm of the moderates at these proposals led them, with the encouragement of some of the more conservative army officers, especially General Lambert, to meet unusually early one morning in December and, in the absence of many of their radical colleagues, to surrender their authority to Cromwell.

In December 1653, therefore, Cromwell had to construct another constitutional settlement. The new government which was set up was based on a written constitution produced by Lambert. This 'Instrument of Government' as it was called was the foundation of Cromwell's rule until it was replaced in 1657 by the 'Humble Petition and Advice'. By the Instrument Cromwell, with the title of Lord Protector, shared power with a parliament which consisted of

only one chamber. Under the Humble Petition and Advice his powers as protector were increased, and a second chamber, the so-called 'Other House', was instituted. Originally the Humble Petition and Advice proposed to restore the monarchy, with Cromwell as king. He hesitated, but in the end, under pressure from the army, refused the Crown. It is clear that Cromwell, who, throughout his career, was involved in so many constitutional experiments, was not wedded to any particular form of government. Its structure was always a secondary consideration in his eyes. It was, he thought, 'but a mortal thing', merely 'dross and dung compared with Christ'. For Cromwell religious considerations came first.

On the left: the wife of the lord mayor of London. Her escort bears witness to the dignity of her own and her husband's position. The lord mayor (below) as leader of the immensely wealthy city of London, the centre of England's financial and economic resources, was a figure of great importance in seventeenth-century England.

Below left: a countrywoman on the way to market to sell her produce. (All three in the British Museum, London.)



Cromwell the radical

In his attitude towards religion Cromwell was far in advance of his time. He had a deep and abiding belief in men's right to freedom of conscience and throughout his protectorate tried to secure as wide a measure of religious toleration as was compatible with the safety of the state. The Cromwellian Church, set up in 1654, covered a wide spectrum of religious beliefs. No agreement on ritual or doctrine was required from its members except for the acceptance of the main principles of Christianity. In the words of a distinguished historian, 'It was not so much a Church as a confederation of Christian sects working together for righteousness under the control of the state.'

Outside this tolerant Establishment dissenters were allowed freedom of worship as long as their conduct did not threaten the integrity of the state. Anglicanism, which did constitute such a threat, was theoretically banned, but in practice enjoyed a wide degree of toleration. Even Catholics, who were regarded by most Englishmen of the day as idolators, and, like Anglicans, were not officially tolerated, were treated with a good deal of leniency. Cromwell's belief in wide religious toleration was very different from the attitude of the two protectorate parliaments of 1654 and 1656, which were dominated by moderate Presbyterians and conservative Independents who sought a much clearer definition of the doctrine of the state Church and wanted to exclude large sections of English Protestantism from legal recognition and protection.

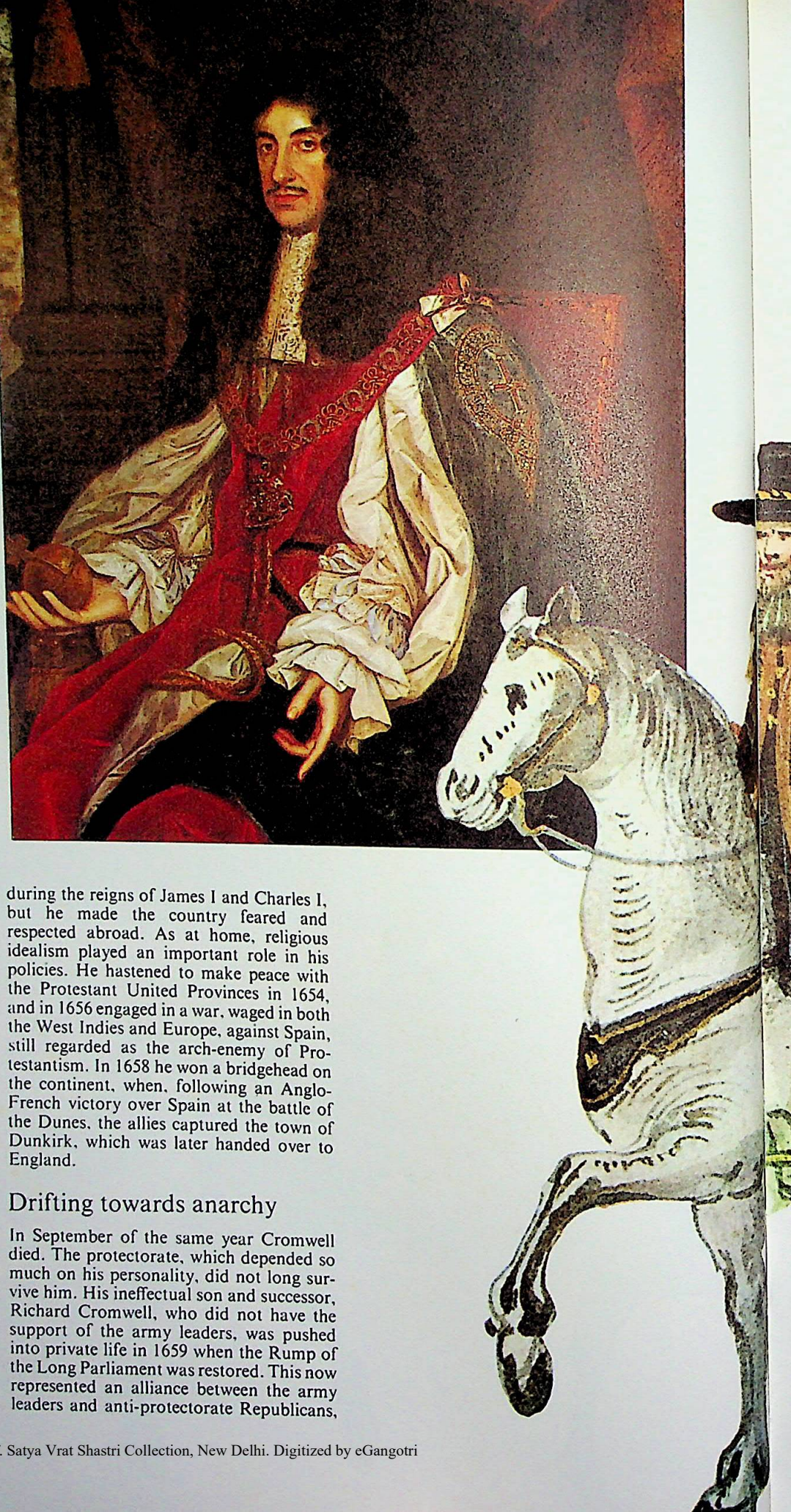
Cromwell, a radical in religious matters, was profoundly conservative in his social attitudes. He saw secular society as an ordered hierarchy based on private property and regarded democratic or crypto-democratic ideas with abhorrence. He showed this very clearly in his attitude towards the Levellers, a group of men both inside and outside the army who were a power of some importance in England between 1647 and 1649. They advocated, among other reforms, a wide extension of the franchise in parliamentary elections. Cromwell thought that this might lead in due course to social as well as political equality. His horror was reflected in his words to the Council of State early in 1649: 'You have no other way to deal with these men but to break them in pieces. . . . If you do not break them they will break you.' He then proceeded himself to suppress the London Levellers and Leveller-led mutinies in the army. 1649 saw the end of the Levellers as a serious political force and as a focus for potential social revolution. Throughout the sixteen-fifties the traditional social hierarchy remained undisturbed in Cromwell's England.

Cromwell pursued an active foreign policy. England had been a power of secondary importance in European affairs

during the reigns of James I and Charles I, but he made the country feared and respected abroad. As at home, religious idealism played an important role in his policies. He hastened to make peace with the Protestant United Provinces in 1654, and in 1656 engaged in a war, waged in both the West Indies and Europe, against Spain, still regarded as the arch-enemy of Protestantism. In 1658 he won a bridgehead on the continent, when, following an Anglo-French victory over Spain at the battle of the Dunes, the allies captured the town of Dunkirk, which was later handed over to England.

Drifting towards anarchy

In September of the same year Cromwell died. The protectorate, which depended so much on his personality, did not long survive him. His ineffectual son and successor, Richard Cromwell, who did not have the support of the army leaders, was pushed into private life in 1659 when the Rump of the Long Parliament was restored. This now represented an alliance between the army leaders and anti-protectorate Republicans,



but soon army and parliament fell out. The country seemed to be drifting towards anarchy. The situation was saved by George Monck, Cromwell's commander-in-chief in Scotland. He marched his well disciplined army south and restored those members of the House of Commons who had been purged by Colonel Pride in 1648. It soon voted to dissolve itself, and when elections for a new parliament were held monarchists won a large majority. The way was open for the restoration of Charles II, who arrived in London, amidst scenes of great rejoicing, in May 1660.

The period 1642-60, which we have just surveyed, was a unique interlude in English history. During these years the Puritans

took advantage of their victory over the established rulers of the country to impose upon England a moral code which proved as distasteful to the populace at large as it was satisfactory to the whole range of Puritan opinion from the conservative Presbyterians of the Long Parliament to the radical sectaries of the Commonwealth and Protectorate.

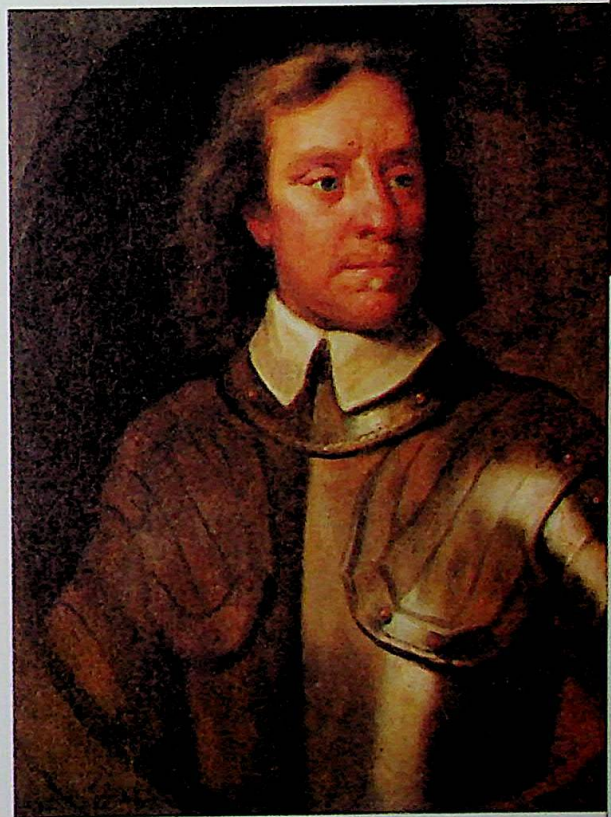
Accepting the Scriptures as an absolute code of behaviour, they exacted Biblical penalties for moral offences: a law of 1650, for example, imposed the death sentence for adultery.

Other legislation tried to stamp out drunkenness, swearing and gambling and to preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath. Such

attempts to interfere with everyday social habits met, however, with little success. They did turn the bulk of the population into active enemies of Puritan morality and paved the way for the hedonistic atmosphere of the reign of Charles II.

With the restoration of 1660 the House of Lords and the Established Church of England returned along with the monarchy. The events of 1640 to 1660 could not, however, be obliterated. The monarchy of Charles II and the restoration Church of Juxon and Sheldon were very different institutions than the pre-civil war kingship and the Laudian Church of England.

As far as the monarchy is concerned Charles II had none of the apparatus for personal rule which all his predecessors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had possessed. The prerogative courts which had been abolished by the Long Parliament in 1641 were not restored and the common law courts reigned supreme in restoration England. The events of 1640 to 1660 had also reduced the power and prestige of the Crown in a more intangible way. A section of the English political community had waged a successful war against the king and had later executed him in public. The death



Above: Oliver Cromwell.
Far left: Charles II wearing his garter robes. (Both in the National Portrait Gallery, London.)
Left: a prosperous English townsman and his wife. (British Museum, London.)



Above: the Great Fire of London. It ravaged the city in 1666 at the height of the Dutch war of 1665-7. (British Museum, London.)

of Charles I on the scaffold was a permanent reminder to later monarchs that they might be held to account by their people.

In the Church the idea of comprehension—the theory that every English man and woman should belong to the state Church as well as to the state itself—was, for all practical purposes, abandoned soon after the restoration. This was because the Puritans, who had dominated religious life during the Interregnum, and the restored hierarchy of the Established Church could not settle their differences. Efforts were made to do so at the Savoy Conference of 1661 but no agreement was reached and when the bishops produced a revised version of the prayer book the Puritan leaders found it quite unacceptable. The book was, however, incorporated in an act of Uniformity, passed in 1662, and all ministers were required both to use the book and to make public declarations of ‘unfeigned assent and consent’ to all its contents. By the end of 1662 nearly 2,000 ministers had lost their livings—a much more sweeping change in the personnel of the Church than had occurred at any one time during the sixteen-forties and sixteen-fifties.

Many of these ministers set up independent congregations which were subject to persecution under the Clarendon Code, a series of repressive laws against dissenters passed between 1661 and 1665. The in-

tensity of persecution, however, varied a good deal and many congregations survived. Their continuing existence symbolised the end of the Tudor and early Stuart ideal of a united Christian society in which Church and state were one.

The House of Lords, just like the Crown, lost prestige as a result of the Interregnum. Neither the peers nor the Commons ever forgot that, between 1649 and 1657 the upper house had been abolished. In the last resort England could do without a house of peers.

The new king

Charles II certainly never forgot that the country had done without a king for eleven years. He was resolved not to ‘go on his travels’ again, and that determination explains why he was never prepared to make heroic stands on matters of conscience, except when the exclusion movement attempted to debar his brother James from the throne and thus destroy the very principle to which he (Charles) owed his crown, that of hereditary right. Charles, in fact, wanted to enjoy life and the country as a whole was sympathetic to a monarchy and court which so openly rejected the rigours of Puritan morality. The king, unassuming and friendly, surrounded by his dogs and his mistresses, was personally popular.

In 1660 Charles took as his chief minister Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon, who had been the mainstay of the Royalist party in exile. He fell from power after the Dutch War of 1665-67 had revealed appalling inefficiency in his administration and went into exile abroad, where he wrote his *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, still one of the finest pieces of English historical writing.

It was during the Dutch War that two of the most dramatic episodes of Restoration history took place—the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London. The plague, which raged from the spring of 1665 to the end of 1666, was the last, and one of the worst, of a series of outbreaks which occurred in England in the three centuries following the Black Death of 1348. At its height in London, in autumn 1665, thousands died each week, many of them covered with the huge sores which were the most appalling signs of the plague’s visitation.

Then, just as the plague was waning, came the Great Fire, which swept through the City for five days in September 1666, destroying more than 13,000 houses and

more than eighty churches, including London's historic cathedral, old St Paul's. The tragedy of the fire, though it was a traumatic experience for the citizens of the capital, did, however, provide the opportunity for a rebuilding of London. This produced not only a city of superior private houses but also Wren's magnificent series of London churches, over fifty in all, including his masterpiece, new St Paul's.

Between 1667 and the early 1670s, while his capital was beginning to recover from the plague and the fire, Charles relied for advice on a group of ministers—themselves holding very different views on many subjects—who came to be known as the Cabal. In 1673, however, Sir Thomas Osborne, who had shown considerable financial ability as Treasurer of the Navy, was appointed Lord Treasurer and soon achieved primacy in the king's counsels. He was created earl of Danby in 1674 and remained in office until 1679. Danby tried to wean Charles away from a pro-French foreign policy which was out of tune with the growing fears of most of his subjects about Louis XIV's expansionist ambitions. Charles had signed the treaty of Dover with France in 1670. By this he agreed, in return for a subsidy, to join France in war against the Dutch. By secret clauses he also promised to declare openly, at a time of his own choosing, his loyalty to the Catholic religion.

As a result of this treaty England joined France in attacking the Dutch in 1672, but in the autumn of the following year the Commons, suspicious of the French alliance, refused to vote supplies for the continuance of the war. Charles was forced to make a separate peace with the Dutch in 1674. For most of the rest of the sixteen-seventies Danby tried to persuade Charles to adopt an openly Protestant stance in foreign affairs, but the king shrank away from a complete break with France. Then, at the end of 1678, everything else was overshadowed by the Popish Plot.

It was in 1678 that Titus Oates, a liar and a scoundrel of the first order, announced that he had secret information about a plot by the Pope and the Jesuits to kill the king and place his brother James, duke of York, an avowed Catholic, on the throne. Protestant Englishmen of the day were prepared to believe almost anything about Catholics and by the time parliament met in October London was in ferment. The plot was the only subject of discussion and when Oates obtained support from the earl of Shaftesbury, a skilful and unscrupulous politician who believed in strictly limited monarchy, the situation became serious for the government. Shaftesbury took advantage of the anti-Catholic feeling produced by the plot to try to secure James's exclusion from the throne. He won the support of three successive Houses of Commons between 1679 and 1681, but Charles refused to consider de-

priving his brother of the succession. When he dissolved the parliament of 1681 the Whigs—as those who favoured exclusion had come to be called to distinguish them from the Tory supporters of hereditary right—talked of armed resistance. In the end, however, they dispersed quietly. Charles had won.

He took advantage of the royalist reaction which followed the defeat of the exclusionist movement to remodel the borough corporations, which elected most M.P.s. Many of these were Whig strongholds, but the new charters which Charles imposed upon them made it probable that in future elections they would select royalist M.P.s.

A Catholic in power

James II felt the benefit of these changes immediately after his accession to the throne in 1685. His first parliament was loyal to the point of subservience. Despite this, however, his reign lasted for only three years. The reason was basically James's desire to restore the Catholic faith to an official and respected place in English society at a time when the great majority of Englishmen still feared and detested it. In such a situation there was sure to be serious conflict.

James tried to further the cause of Catholicism by a variety of measures, each of which increased antagonism towards the Crown in the country at large. He appointed Catholics to high office in both the army and civil government, he set up an ecclesiastical commission reminiscent of the old Court of High Commission, he received a papal envoy at Whitehall, he issued declarations of indulgence suspending the penal laws against Catholics and dissenters. He wanted to persuade parliament to repeal the penal laws altogether, but in order to achieve this he had to set about a further remodelling of the municipal corporations. Charles II's reforms, it is true, had handed control of the boroughs over to fervent Tories, but these men were committed Anglicans as well and clearly would not have been prepared to approve of measures harmful to the position of the Church of England. James's reforms meant that in many boroughs the parliamentary franchise and the administration of justice were handed over to Catholics and dissenters. He also instituted a great purge of Anglican county notables.

In 1686 and 1687 most of the established J.P.s in England and Wales, the effective rulers of the country in the localities, were replaced by men of inferior social rank. These changes caused the most profound resentment among the propertied classes who felt that the country was faced with two major threats, one to the whole established fabric of society, the other to the position of the Church of England. The crowning blow from their point of view was the birth of a son and heir to James in June of 1688. Until then the Crown's opponents

could take comfort in the thought that he would be succeeded by one of his Protestant daughters.

A call for help

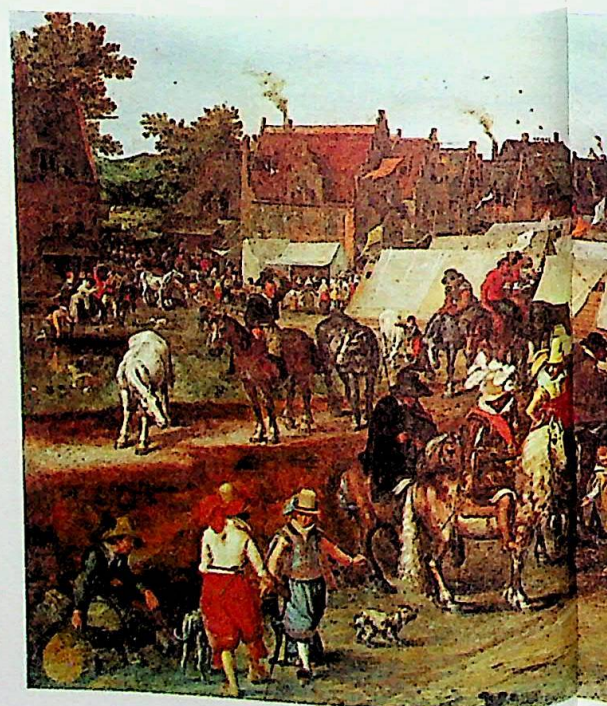
In this situation seven prominent Englishmen signed an invitation to William of Orange, ruler of Holland, a grandson of Charles I and husband of James's elder daughter Mary, to come to England and save the country from James's policies. William landed in November and the following month James fled to France. The stage was set for the joint accession of William and Mary to the throne and the revolution settlement of 1689.

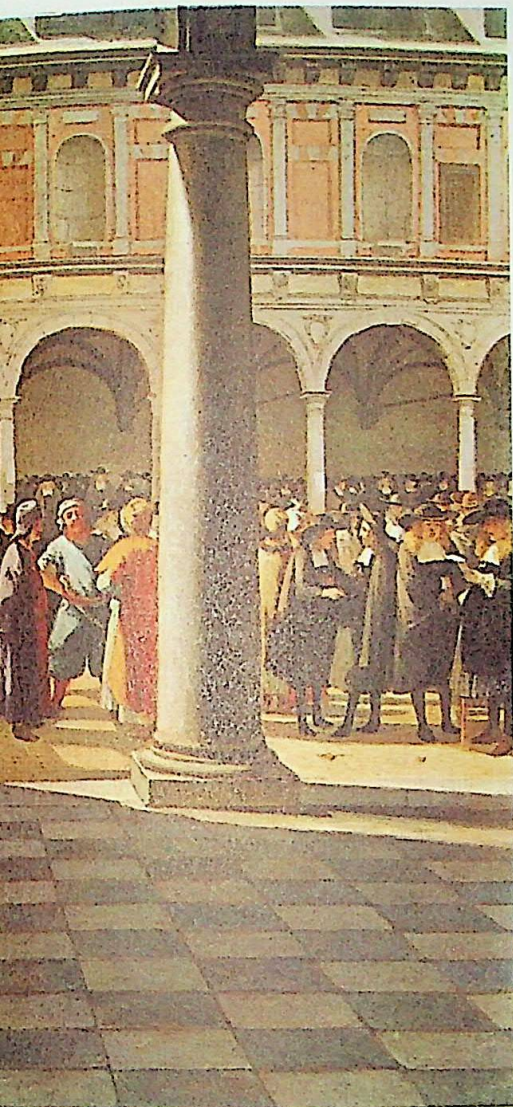
We have seen, therefore, that the political and constitutional history of seventeenth century England was dominated by conflicts between the Crown and large numbers of its subjects. Domestic arguments did not, however, prevent the country from expanding abroad or inhibit literary and scientific developments. The century saw the foundation of an English colonial empire in America and a great expansion in both the volume and the content of English trade. We cannot discuss these developments in detail here, but they set the scene for further advances in the eighteenth century when the country emerged as a great colonial, commercial and financial power. In the field of culture and science Englishmen made unique contributions to the age. The names of Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, Hobbes, Locke, Dryden and Newton—a roll-call of genius—are sufficient explanation of the fact that, by the end of the century, England was challenging France for the intellectual leadership of Europe.

Right: the courtyard of the Amsterdam stock exchange. Amsterdam was the centre of world commerce and finance in the seventeenth century. (Boymans Museum, Rotterdam.)

Below: the interior of a middle-class Dutch house. It gives some idea of the standards which were common among the Dutch bourgeoisie in the seventeenth century. (Boymans Museum, Rotterdam.)

Below right: a horse market at Valkenburg. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)





The golden age of the United Provinces

A rebellious Holland freed from Spanish rule; religious quarrels and a struggle for power; renewed conflict with Spain; the growing strength of the Dutch republic; the ascendancy of William III; religious freedom and economic prosperity; the Dutch find wealth in the East Indies; the glories of Dutch painting.

In 1609 the Spanish government concluded a military truce with the Seven United Provinces of the Netherlands which had been in revolt against its authority since the fifteen-seventies. Philip III of Spain was not prepared at that time to recognise formally the complete sovereignty which his rebellious subjects had claimed since the fifteen-eighties, but his government had negotiated with them 'as if' they were an independent power. Although Spain was thus forced by military and financial exhaustion to concede what amounted to a practical recognition of sovereign authority to the northern Netherlands, the king and his advisers had some consolation. Thanks to the military genius

of the duke of Parma the southern Netherlands, which in the fifteen-seventies had also seemed likely to break away, had been recovered for Spain in the early fifteen-eighties. The Netherlands were thus divided—permanently as it turned out. The factors which determined the line of division were not linguistic or religious—there were many Dutch speakers in the Spanish Netherlands and very many Catholics in the north—but geographic and military: it was essentially the position of the Spanish and Dutch forces in the country at the time of the truce which determined where the frontier would be drawn.

The seven provinces which had struggled





against Spain for some forty years in order to win their freedom were to enjoy a glorious career in the seventeenth century as the world's greatest commercial power, but in 1609 powerful forces in the country feared that its independence might be short-lived. Those who took this view believed that the truce was a great mistake. The Spanish government, they argued, had concluded it from a position of weakness but with a view to renewing the struggle later, after a period of peace had enabled the still mighty Spanish empire to mobilise new resources.

The principal protagonist of this view was Prince Maurice of Orange, son of William the Silent. He held the position of *stadtholder* (governor) in five of the seven provinces, an office which gave him considerable influence in the internal affairs of each province and of the country as a whole. He had strong support among the more zealous Calvinists,

particularly those of the lower middle class, men who regarded any agreement with the Spaniards, short of complete victory, as a sign of weakness.

On the other side stood the ruling 'regent' families, who dominated the states or governing assemblies of each of the provinces and through them the States-General of the United Provinces. The regents were an oligarchy of wealthy burghers, particularly strong in Holland, the dominant province in the Union, who thought, on the whole, that the advantage of the state would best be served by peace. They believed firmly in the need to subject the Church to the secular power. The Calvinist ministers and the enthusiasts among their flocks, on the other hand, stressed the independent rights of the Church: they criticised not only the eagerness of the regents to negotiate with the Spanish heretics but also their

readiness to extend toleration at home to the large number of Catholic and Protestant dissenters. The leader of the regent party and the man who was principally responsible for the successful negotiation of the 1609 truce was Oldenbarnevelt, advocate (that is, principal official) of the States of Holland. His disagreement with Prince Maurice over the conclusion of the truce was the beginning of a conflict between the two men which was to end in tragedy in 1619.

Violent religious arguments

We have seen that religious passions were involved in the arguments about the truce, and the whole domestic history of the republic in the years before the renewal of war with Spain in 1621 was dominated by disputes in which religion and politics were inextricably intermingled. The religious side



On the left: the Amsterdam Civic Guard celebrating the Peace of Münster in 1648 when Spain finally recognised the independence of the United Provinces. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)

Below: a banquet held by officers of the corps of archers of Saint George. (Franz Hals Museum, Haarlem.)



of the conflict turned on a theological dispute between two professors at the university of Leyden in Holland. One of these, Arminius, put forward views on free will which stressed man's ability to help to determine the fate of his soul by his own efforts. The other, Gomar, stressed the traditional Calvinist concept of predestination, the idea that God has decided each soul's fate in advance and that man is powerless to aid his salvation by his own efforts.

These rival ideas became involved with politics in 1610, when the supporters of Arminius, a minority in the ministry, set out their views on the disputed questions in a Remonstrance, which they presented to the States of Holland, together with a request for protection from their opponents. The States, with their firm views on the responsibility of the secular power for ecclesiastical

affairs, could hardly refuse an appeal couched in these terms. Under Oldenbarnevelt's leadership they granted the desired protection, an action which infuriated the majority among the ministry who followed Gomar. In the heated atmosphere thus engendered the States' subsequent efforts at mediation between the two sides did little to help matters, and in 1611 the Gomarists presented a Counter-Remonstrance containing their own views on the points at issue. For the next few years the arguments of Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants resounded throughout the province of Holland and indeed throughout the United Provinces as a whole. Prince Maurice, alienated from Oldenbarnevelt as a result of the truce of 1609 and at odds with him in subsequent years over other issues of foreign policy, openly joined the Contra-Remonstrant side in 1617. The political issue was

thus very clearly joined: a struggle between Maurice and Oldenbarnevelt for the dominant position in the state, a conflict no less real because it was waged under the cloak of high religious principles.

Arminianism had comparatively little support outside Holland and the other states tended to follow the lead of their Contra-Remonstrant ministers. Accordingly the majority in the States-General supported the Gomarists against the States of Holland which, though with loud and important dissenting voices, particularly from Amsterdam, were for the Arminian party. Matters came to a climax in August 1618 when Maurice, acting on a warrant from the States-General, ordered the arrest of Oldenbarnevelt. He followed this up by purging the advocate's supporters from the town councils of Holland and replacing them with Contra-Remonstrants. The States of





Holland, thus transformed, authorised the trial of Oldenbarnevelt before an extraordinary court which, in May 1619, sentenced him to death for jeopardising "the position of the faith . . . and of the state". He was executed the following day. It was a poor reward for a man who had probably done more than any other, with the exception of William the Silent himself, to establish the Dutch republic.

On the left: the interior of the church of Assendelft. Note the austerity of the interior of this Calvinist place of worship. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)

Above: the administrators of the orphanage of Haarlem. The United Provinces were far ahead of most other European countries in their welfare services. (Franz Hals Museum, Haarlem.)

Prince Maurice triumphs

Even before Oldenbarnevelt's trial and execution a national synod of the Church, from which Remonstrants were excluded, had met at Dort and condemned Arminian doctrines. The leading Remonstrant ministers were banished from the country and their supporters excluded from public office and denied the right to freedom of worship though freedom of conscience was still allowed: there was no suggestion of enforcing attendance at the State Church. The events of 1618-19 were, of course, a great triumph for Prince Maurice. From then until his death in 1625 he was virtually supreme in the state. In 1621, however, Maurice turned his attention away from the internal affairs of the Republic and focused it on the war with Spain, which broke out again that year with the expiry of the twelve-year truce.

This war, the second stage of the great struggle against Spain, lasted until the Treaty of Münster in 1648, when the Spanish government at last formally recognised the sovereignty of the United Provinces and also their annexation of territory in the southern Netherlands—parts of Flanders and Brabant—which had been

conquered during the war. Indeed, during the 1640s Maurice's successor, his brother Frederick Henry, became more and more committed to a personal foreign policy which took little heed of the real interests of the republic. That policy combined support for the royalists in England—his son William had married Princess Mary, daughter of Charles I, in 1641—with a continuing dependence on and even subservience to the growing power of France which had been the republic's ally in the war, but which might, and indeed later did prove as great a threat to the Netherlands' liberties as Spain had ever been. His death, therefore, came at a most opportune time for the peace party, as his son and successor, William II, lacked the influence and experience necessary to prevent the conclusion of the agreements at Münster, which left France to continue the war against Spain without Dutch aid.

William, however, was not prepared to accept the situation. He was determined to renew the war and also, if possible, to secure the restoration of his brother-in-law Charles Stuart in England. These ambitious plans, which necessitated the maintenance of a large army, led to bitter conflict with the



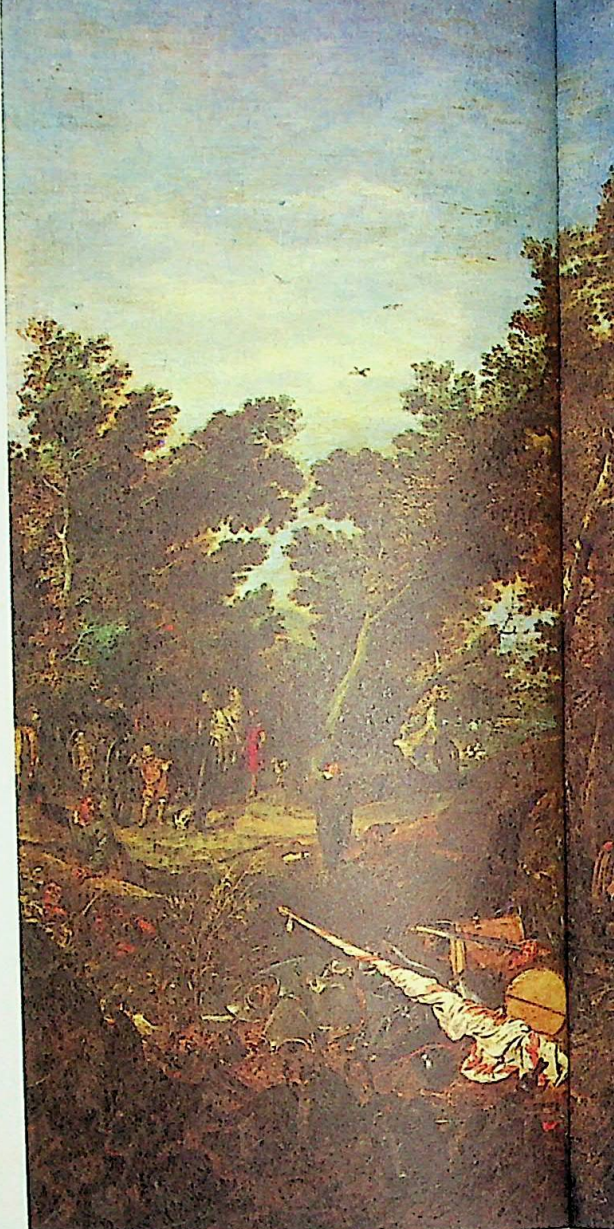
States of Holland and at one time civil war seemed imminent. In November 1650, however, William died. Eight days later his only child, the future William III, was born. There could be no question of appointing the infant prince to his father's dignities. During 1650-72 most of the republic's provinces were without a stadtholder.

This was the 'republican' period, a distinctive phase in Dutch history. It was ushered in by the Grand Assembly, which met at the Hague in 1651. The States of Holland hoped that this body, representing all the provincial estates, would produce a new form of government for the republic. Their hope was disappointed, but the Assembly did take important decisions which greatly strengthened the control of the individual provinces over the army. As a result the armed forces of the country were virtually split into seven. This was a considerable triumph for the centrifugal tendencies within the United Provinces: indeed, after 1651 the country seemed more like a union of independent states than a federal republic.

Power follows wealth

The years 1650-1 thus witnessed a 'revolution' in the United Provinces. William II's attempt to enforce his personal foreign policy, an attempt which would surely have had important constitutional results if it had succeeded, was followed by his early and unexpected death and a reaction in which the views of the ruling regent oligarchy of Holland won the day. Indeed, in the decentralised republic of 1651-72 Holland's position was stronger than ever. This was partly due to intrinsic economic strength—it was by far the wealthiest province, contributing some fifty-eight per cent of the total taxes of the union—and partly due to the emergence in 1653 of John de Witt, a statesman of note, as grand pensionary of Holland, an office in which he was the heir of Oldenbarnevelt (the title advocate had been changed to grand pensionary in 1619.)

De Witt's policy was fundamentally conservative. Essentially, he wanted to preserve the status quo of 1651 both at home and abroad. The great threats to this



Above left: William of Orange, founder of the United Provinces. He was assassinated in 1584. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)

Above right: celebrations on the occasion of the truce between Spain and the United Provinces, signed in 1609. This lasted until 1621. (Musée du Louvre, Paris.)

Right: a winter landscape by the well-known Dutch painter, Brueghel. (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.)



ambition came from the House of Orange and its partisans at home and from England and France abroad. The Orange family was not resigned to the loss of its great position in the republic; England, as we have already seen, was jealous of the commercial dominance of the United Provinces; and after 1668 France, under Louis XIV, was determined to humble the country which had opposed her political ambitions in the Spanish Netherlands during the war of Devolution. De Witt's system thus collapsed in ruins in 1672 with the Anglo-French attack on the republic and the restoration of the office of stadtholder to the House of Orange in the person of William III. The people held de Witt responsible for the disasters of the French invasion and in August 1672 he and his brother were lynched at the Hague. Like Oldenbarnevelt he deserved a better fate. He had served the republic to the best of his very considerable abilities and it is difficult to see what he could have done to prevent the French invasion.

From 1672 until his death thirty years later William III dominated the history of the United Provinces. When he assumed office it seemed, due to the successes of French arms, that the republic was on the brink of dissolution. By 1674, however, the French had withdrawn from Dutch soil. This was due at least as much to Louis XIV's errors as to William III's energy, but the events of 1672-4 gave the latter a prestige as saviour of his country which stood him in good stead in later years. After the end of the war in 1678 the United Provinces enjoyed a decade of peace, but William's régime in the republic, just like his rule in England after 1689, was dominated by his determination to oppose Louis XIV's ambitions and reduce the power of France. He had the satisfaction of living to see the first major check to French power in the war of 1688-97 and died in 1702 at the beginning of the long and costly struggle over the Spanish succession. This war put an end to France's hopes of dominating Europe, but at the same time imposed a strain on Dutch resources from which the republic never really recovered.

Corruption in high places

Even before William's death the effects of war in the 1690s had considerably reduced his popularity. That had been at its height in the 1670s. In 1674 the States of Holland and Zeeland made his title a hereditary office and in 1675 the States-General did the same for his offices of captain-general and admiral-general of the union. By 1700, however, the lower middle classes in particular were suffering severely from the increased burdens of war taxation. The middle class as a whole resented William's failure to curtail the power of the ruling regent oligarchy. They also objected to his toleration of

growing corruption in appointments to official posts in order to secure the nomination of his own followers and obtain much needed revenue to further the war effort.

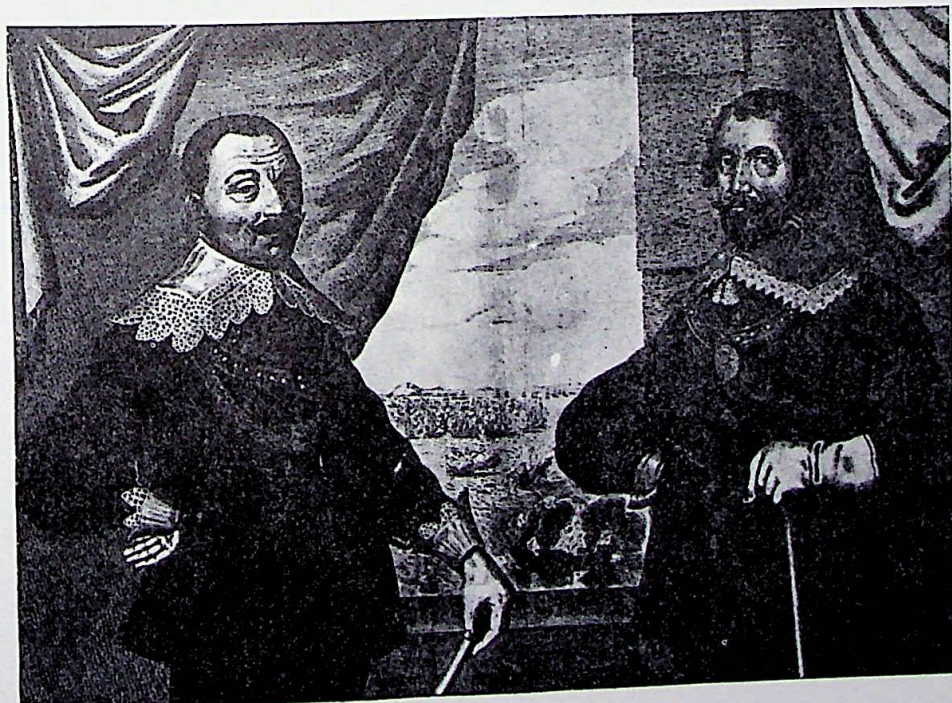
An outline political and diplomatic history of the United Provinces in the seventeenth century with its ecclesiastical squabbles and recurrent conflicts between the House of Orange and the republican party does little to suggest a 'golden age': quite the contrary. Yet there is no doubt that the seventeenth century was the greatest period in the history of the Netherlands. It witnessed a Dutch commercial and imperial expansion and cultural flowering which were among the wonders of the contemporary world and which should not be obscured by the often sordid details of

domestic political rivalries.

The imperial expansion of the United Provinces took place against a social background which was entirely different from that of any other country in Europe. It is not easy to make generalisations about the social structure of the republic which varied greatly from province to province. The nobility, for example, was much more important in Guelderland than in Holland, where it was numerically weak and economically insignificant. Holland, of course, dominated the union and it is not altogether unrealistic to take the social situation there as representative of the ethos of life in the country as a whole during the period of its greatest glory.

Holland was dominated by its urban





In the seventeenth century the United Provinces had by far the largest commercial fleet of any of the European powers. They also won notable naval victories with their powerful warships.

Above left: four ships arriving at Amsterdam. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)

Above: the 'Hollandia', with the grand pensionary, John de Witt, aboard. (Nederlands Historisch Scheepvaart Museum, Amsterdam.)

Below left: the battle of Solbay in 1672, when the Dutch admiral, Ruyter, defeated an Anglo-French fleet. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)

Left: Admiral Tromp and Vice-Admiral de Witt.

patriciate, the 'regent' class, which by the middle of the seventeenth century had established itself firmly as a burgher oligarchy in control of the administration and economic life of the province. It is not easy to estimate the number of regent families, but they certainly formed a very small minority of the population—perhaps only one in every thousand belonged to the regent class. Below them in the social hierarchy there was a large middle class with wide variations of income and status but all sharing to some extent in the prosperity which unparalleled economic expansion brought to seventeenth century Holland. Even the artisans and other members of the lower classes who thronged the province's cities and towns enjoyed on the whole a standard of life which would have been the envy of their fellows in other European countries. Moreover, the really poor were not neglected. Dutch workhouses, orphanages and other charitable institutions may have been primitive by modern standards, but they were far in advance of anything found in most other countries at the time.

Outstanding tolerance

This variegated population belonged to a number of religious groups. Perhaps one-third of the population—and now we are speaking of the union as a whole—belonged to the official Reformed Church as it emerged at the Synod of Dort. Nearly half may have been Catholics, and the remainder were Remonstrants, Lutherans, Baptists and adherents of numerous small sects. There was freedom of conscience: the state Church made no systematic effort to enforce Calvinism, but freedom of worship was restricted and dissenters often found it difficult to hold administrative posts. All in all, however, the religious policy of the Dutch states was liberal. Certainly, when compared to contemporary France, where the Huguenots were subjected to violent persecution, it was a model of enlightenment.

The population of the United Provinces thus enjoyed a combination of religious freedom and economic prosperity which was unique in Europe. The prosperity was based upon the success of Dutch trade. Although the foundations of Dutch commercial greatness were laid in the Middle Ages it was only during the period of the revolt against Spain, probably sometime between the fifteen-nineties and the sixteenth-century, that the northern Netherlands became unquestionably the leading seafaring and trading nation in the world. Dutch commercial preponderance in the seventeenth century was based upon a combination of factors: the geographical situation of the republic, ideally situated to act as an entrepôt for the trade of northern and central Europe; the long seafaring traditions of the country's maritime

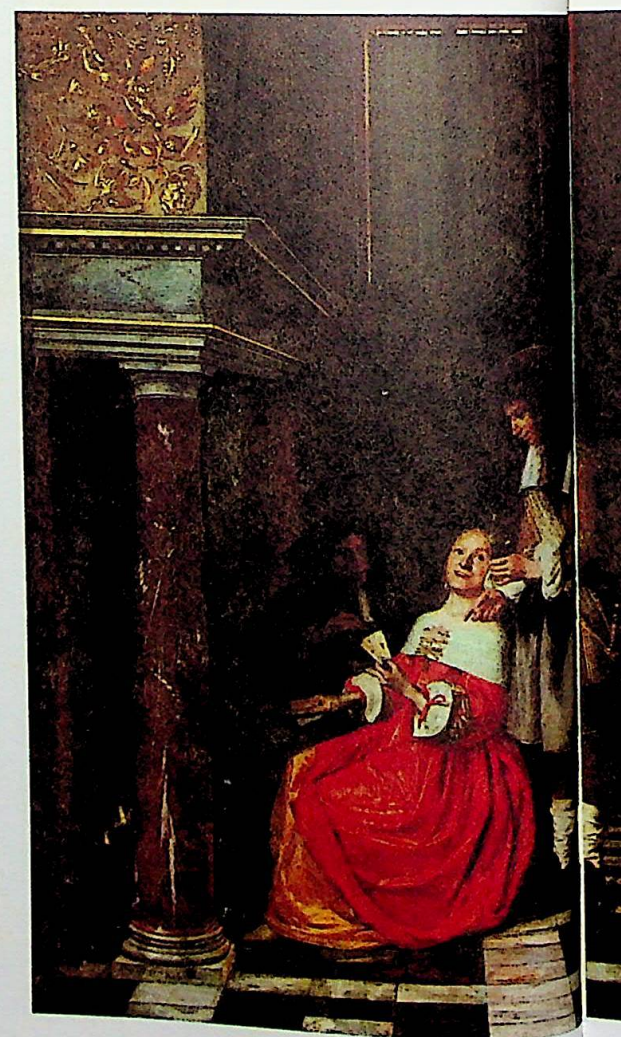
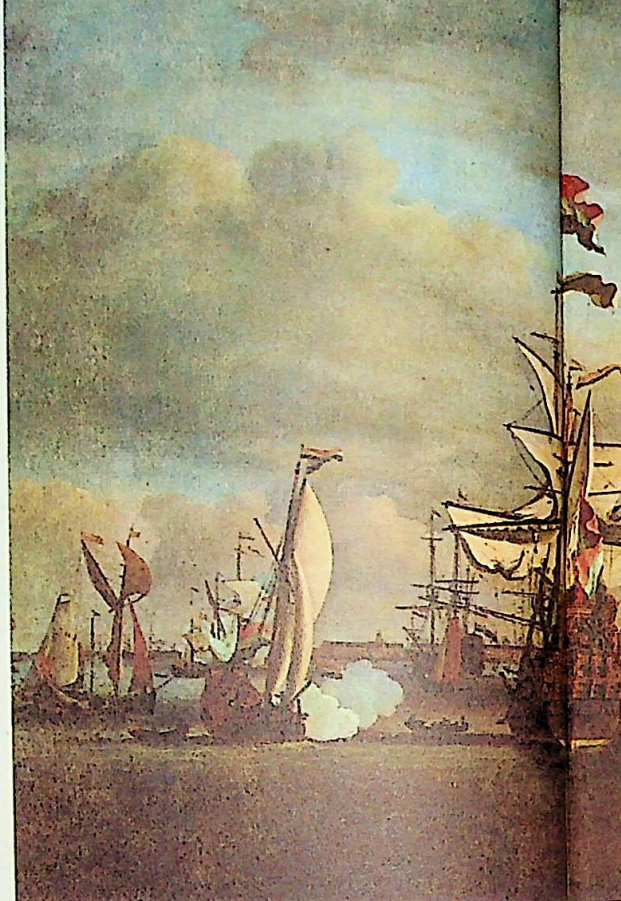
provinces; the absence of state interference in economic life: the fact that the States-General had neither the authority nor the desire to introduce economic planning; and the absence, at least for most of the century, of really efficient competitors.

It was a combination of these factors which enabled a group of Amsterdam merchants to tell the States of Holland in 1629, 'during the truce, through our economic management and exertions we have sailed all nations off the seas, drawn almost all trade from other lands hither and served the whole of Europe with our ships.' This was not an exaggerated boast and the trend continued after the renewal of war in 1621.

French, English and Mediterranean ports were filled with Dutch vessels carrying raw materials or manufactured goods which they sold or exchanged for other commodities. Grain and naval stores were obtained in the Baltic, cloth in England, linens in Germany, salt and wines in France, oil, fruit and silks in the Mediterranean. From America came sugar, from the East Indies spices and other luxuries. This great Dutch carrying trade was centred in the ports of Holland, especially in the town of Amsterdam.

By the mid-seventeenth century Amsterdam was one of the great cities of Europe, with a population of perhaps 150,000. It was the centre of the Baltic trade, the great source of its prosperity, and of the west and east Indian trades. During the seventeenth century, however, Amsterdam became much more than the world's greatest port. It also became the centre of the international money market, outstripping Venice and Genoa in that respect. The accumulation of capital in the United Provinces, which made this development possible, was based on the country's trading successes but was aided by the policy of the town government of Amsterdam which in 1609 set up a Bank designed to finance international trade. It had considerable success and by the mid-seventeenth century the republic was clearly the leading financial as well as the leading commercial power in the world, a fact which was very plain at the time of Louis XIV's invasion in 1672. In that year, when the rate of interest on the Dutch national debt stood at only 3½ per cent there was a negligible response to a French public loan offered at 5½ per cent.

Most of the ships which constantly filled the port of Amsterdam were engaged in European trade but an increasing number sailed to and from other continents, notably the Americas and Asia. In the seventeenth century the republic won two empires, one in America and the other in the East Indies. She soon lost most of her American acquisitions but her great East Indian possessions remained a valuable asset until the twentieth century.





Above: the port of Amsterdam, by far the greatest commercial centre in seventeenth-century Europe. The forest of masts bears witness to its world-wide trading connections. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)
On the left: a card game, painted by Pieter de Hooch. Note the splendid interior of this seventeenth-century Dutch house. (Musée du Louvre, Paris.)



Wealth from the Spice Islands

The republic's possessions in the East Indies were controlled by the Dutch East India Company which became, in the seventeenth century, the most powerful European institution in Asia and the greatest trading corporation in the world. The company was founded in 1602 to regulate and protect the already considerable trade carried on by the Dutch in the eastern seas. This was necessary because that trade was a challenge to the traditional dominance of Portugal in the area, and Portugal, then a possession of the Spanish crown, was inevitably involved in Spain's war against her rebellious Netherlands provinces.

The company was given full authority in the east, with the right to maintain military forces on sea and by land, to make war and peace, coin money and found colonies. Under two great proconsuls, Coen and Van Diemen, whose careers in the East Indies spanned the period 1618 to 1645, it made spectacular progress, founding its capital at Batavia on the island of Java, obtaining and then consolidating a hold on the Moluccas, the fabulous 'spice islands', which were, in the eyes of the company's servants, the most valuable part of the whole eastern commercial system, and expelling the Portuguese from Malacca and from part of Ceylon. In 1652 the company established a colony at the Cape of Good Hope on the southern tip of Africa, and after 1660 consolidated its hold on the East Indies as a whole.

The company's chief imports into Holland were spices and textiles. The latter, principally silks and cotton piece goods, became more and more important as the century advanced and by 1700 were the most valuable part of the eastern trade. Although it was first and foremost a commercial organisation the company's conquests and its need to supervise and control the native principalities in the Indies involved it in heavy expenses. In 1669 it possessed forty ships of war and 10,000 soldiers in addition to its 150 trading vessels. Military expenditure as heavy as this soon reduced its profits and in addition it suffered from servants who tended to promote their own private trading interests at the expense of those of the company as a whole. By 1700 therefore the company had begun to decline. This decline was, of course, entirely relative. Although its profits were less than they had been in the great years of the seventeenth century it remained a very important body until nearly 1800.

The East India Company was founded principally as a trading body. The reasons for the inception of the West India Company in 1621 were different. It was formed essentially to fight against Spain and Portugal in the Americas, and was thus, in origin, an instrument of war rather than a commercial company. It soon captured

some islands in the West Indies but its principal efforts were made in Brazil and in New Netherland, a Dutch colony centred on Manhattan island, which it took over in 1623. New Netherland was ceded to England in 1667 after the second Dutch war, and substantial conquests made in north-eastern Brazil after 1630 had to be abandoned to the Portuguese by the 1650s. The prospects of a Dutch American empire, therefore, which came to the fore only in the early years of the seventeenth century, had collapsed by the 1660s.

Right: a Dutch family giving a recital. This painting by Molenaeer typifies the realism and attention to detail which were so characteristic of Dutch art in the seventeenth century. (Franz Hals Museum, Amsterdam.)

Below: 'The Night Watch', by Rembrandt, shows members of the Dutch militia gathering behind two officers. Amateur soldiers like these opposed the French invaders with great determination in 1672. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)

Paintings of everyday life

The Dutch expansion overseas, symbolised by the creation of the West and East India Companies, can be paralleled by the expansion of Dutch cultural horizons at home. The seventeenth century was the great age of Dutch art and literature. The growing numbers and wealth of the middle class in the republic led to an increasing demand for aesthetic satisfaction, a demand which produced different forms of artistic expression from those found in the absolutist and baroque culture which dominated most of the rest of western Europe.

Painting was by far the most important of the Dutch arts. There was little scope for notable architecture or sculpture. These, in the seventeenth century, depended largely on the existence of patrons dedicated to conspicuous consumption, great princes and cardinals, or nobles of the highest rank, the







A self-portrait of the artist Jacob Jordaens, seen here together with his family. (Museo del Prado, Madrid.)

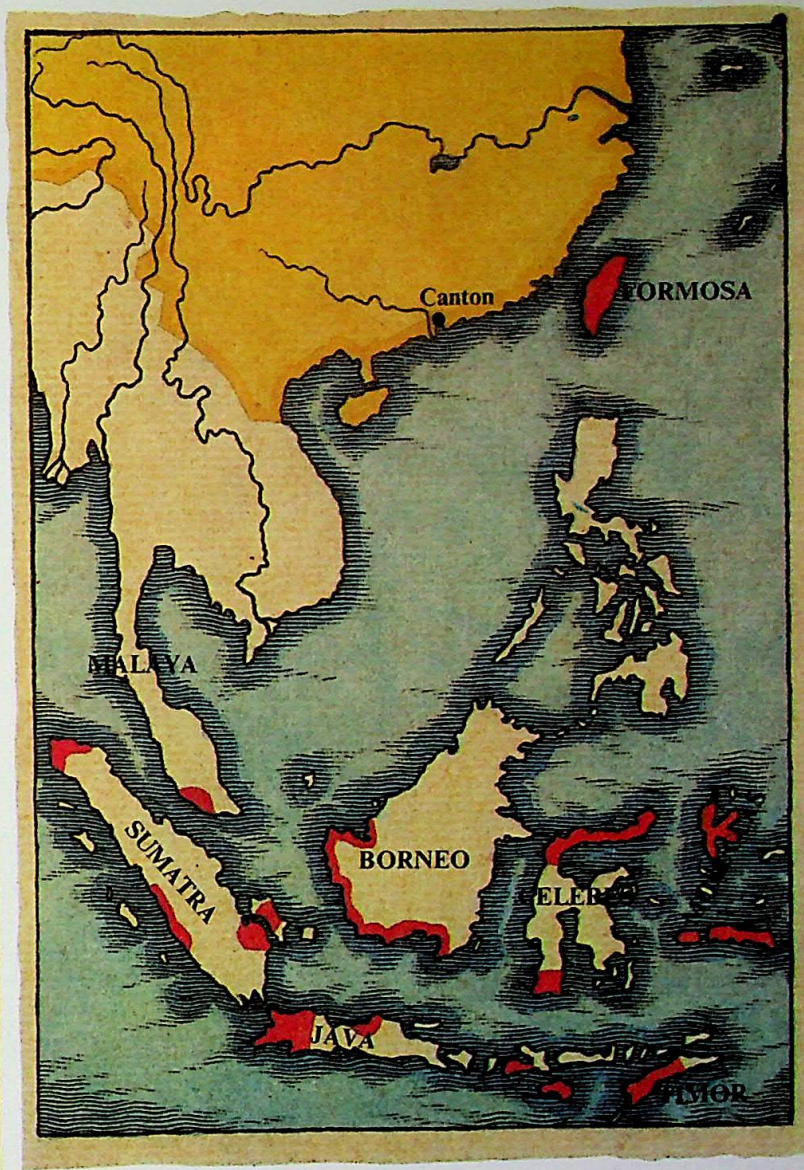
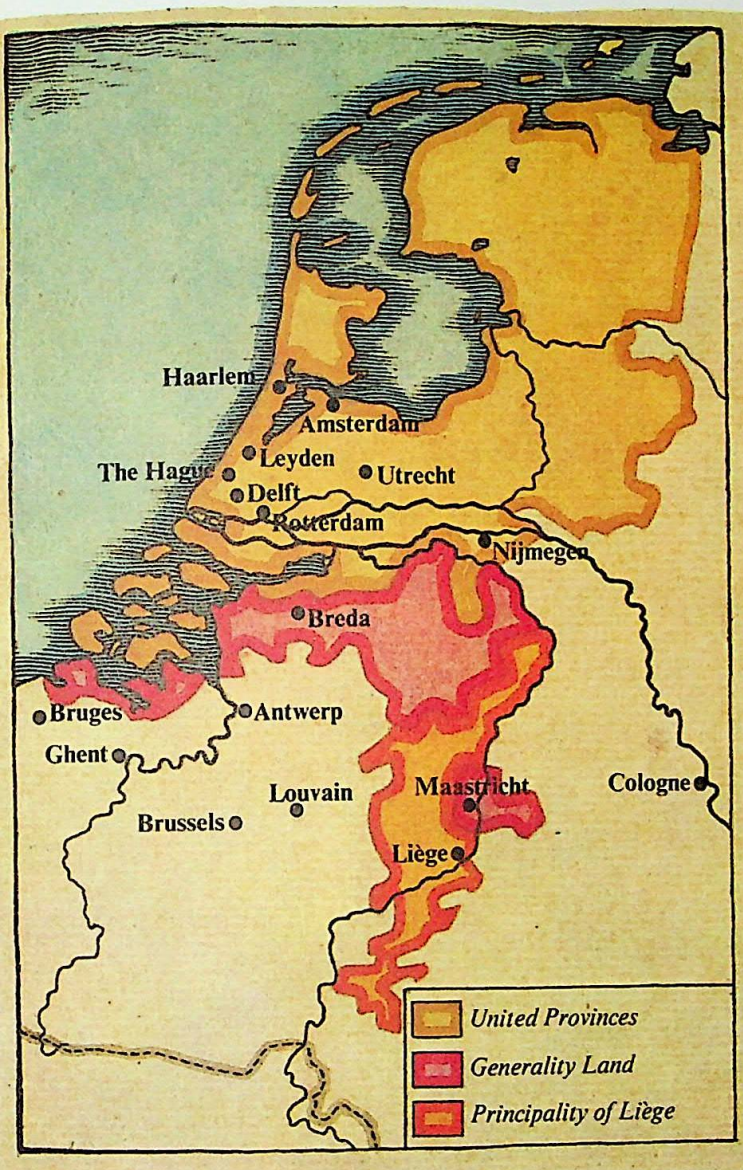
kind of men who were not to be found in the Netherlands. On the other hand, those who enjoyed even modest prosperity could aspire to the ownership of paintings. Thousands of Dutchmen did. The pictures which they bought were characterised by realism and by infinite variety: still-lives, landscapes, seascapes, individual and group portraits, views of towns, studies of animals, pictures of the interiors of churches—to select just some, including the most important, of the subjects which were favoured by Dutch artists of the time. There were dozens of good Dutch painters in the seventeenth century, several great ones—like Frans Hals, who painted really splendid portrait groups, and Jan Vermeer of Delft, who produced magnificent scenes of his native town—and one unquestioned genius, Rembrandt, a man whose work can never be adequately described but which, with its humanity and its inner simplicity, gives the impression that its creator had looked at some of the great secrets of the universe. To prove the point it is only necessary to look at his wonderful series of self-portraits, which depict the physical and spiritual

development of a genius as seen by himself.

The greatness of Dutch literature in the seventeenth century has received less general recognition than the greatness of its painting, but it was a time of the highest achievement in both prose and poetry. Cats, Huygens, Hooft and Vondel, to mention only four names, wrote verse and prose of the highest calibre. Vondel, regarded by his fellow countrymen as their greatest poet, on a par with Shakespeare, has never won equal recognition in other countries, but the perennial fascination which he has exercised over the minds of Netherlands through such plays as *Lucifer* (1654) and *Jephtha* (1659) makes him the worthy leader of a golden age in literature.

When he died in 1679 that golden age was almost over, in other aspects of Dutch life as well as literature. It has always been recognised that Dutch cultural inspiration, as well as the country's economic and political strength, declined in the eighteenth century. The political and economic deterioration must not be exaggerated or antedated. The United Provinces entered the war of the Spanish Succession as a great

power, and her commercial and financial predominance in Europe lasted well into the eighteenth century. But already by 1700 there were signs that the rising power of England, with a larger population and superior natural resources would, in a generation or so, outstrip her in both trade and finance. The cultural decline came earlier and was more dramatic. By 1680 the great age of Dutch painting and literature was over. The men of genius had died leaving no successors.



Above: under the Treaty of Münster of 1648 Spain recognised the independence of the United Provinces. During the long struggle with Spain the United Provinces had also conquered part of the Southern Netherlands. By the terms of the treaty this area, known as the Generality Land, was formally ceded to the United Provinces and placed under the direct rule of the States-General. Bounded on both sides by the Spanish Netherlands, the episcopal principality of Liège remained technically a sovereign member of the Holy Roman Empire.

Right: the possessions which the United Provinces so spectacularly acquired in the East Indies in the seventeenth century, including the wealthy Spice Islands, were controlled by the powerful Dutch East India Company.



During the long reign of Louis XIV (the longest in European history) France became the dominant power in Europe and a perpetual threat to the security of its neighbours. France's substantial territorial acquisitions were made chiefly at the expense of Spain which continued its slow decline throughout the seventeenth century. Although Louis XIV managed to place his grandson on the Spanish throne his expansionist aims were, however, finally thwarted by the Treaty of Utrecht (1713).



The changing pattern of Europe

The decline of Spain; France uses military power and diplomatic skill; Louis XIV's quest for glory brings war with Spain and the United Provinces; France dominates Europe; the question of the Spanish succession; France on the defensive; the balance of power changes.

When Louis XIV assumed personal charge of his kingdom in 1661 France was the greatest power in Europe. She had achieved that position as a result of a long struggle with the Austrian and Spanish branches of the Habsburg family, a conflict which, in its most recent phase, had lasted from 1635 to 1659. The Austrian Habsburgs, headed by the Holy Roman Emperor, were humiliated at the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, when France not only gained the three bishoprics of Metz, Toul and Verdun, comprising important territories on her eastern

frontier, but the Emperor's rights in Alsace as well. In 1659 the Treaty of the Pyrenees, which brought the Spanish phase of the war to an end, gave her the provinces of Roussillon and Cerdagne, Spanish territory lying to the north of the Pyrenees, and most of Artois in the Spanish Netherlands as well.

The Treaty of the Pyrenees demonstrated clearly to the world at large that the great days of the Spanish empire were over. In the sixteenth century Spain had been the dominant power. After her acquisition of Portugal in 1580 she controlled the greatest

Above: Turenne at the battle of the Dunes, near Dunkirk, in 1658, when an Anglo-French army under his command inflicted a severe defeat on Spain. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

empire that the world had yet seen, with far flung possessions in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. That empire had largely been created by the Castilian provinces which formed the heartland of the Iberian peninsula and the strength and stability of Spain as a whole depended on the continuing power of Castile. The years between 1590 and 1620, however, saw a rapid erosion of the three fundamental foundations of Castile's greatness, rising population, productivity and the revenue which she obtained from her American colonies. The decline of Castile's ability to support the burdens of empire led the Count-Duke of Olivares, Philip IV's leading minister from 1621 to 1643, to turn to the kingdoms of Portugal and Aragon for greater contributions. This led to revolts there, and these, in turn, further weakened the empire as a whole. By 1661 Spain was very clearly in decline.

Indeed, the greatness of France in 1661 was founded at least as much on the weaknesses of the other European states as on her own intrinsic strength. Wherever Louis looked conditions seemed favourable for extending French influence. The newly restored Charles II of England was preoccupied with the settlement of his kingdom after the upheavals of 1640 to 1660 and was in any case an admirer of Louis. The United Provinces, under John de Witt, were preoccupied with defending their commercial supremacy and preventing a return to power of the House of Orange. Moreover, they had fought with France against Spain in the 1630s and 1640s and, though very well aware of the potential threat of growing French power, continued their traditional anti-Spanish stance.

Louis, therefore, had nothing to fear from England or the Dutch. He had equally little cause to worry about the Emperor Leopold I. From the 1660s until the 1680s Leopold's main preoccupation was the defence of his own hereditary Austrian and Hungarian dominions against the Ottoman Turks. The Turkish empire, which had declined sharply in power in the early seventeenth century under a series of incompetent sultans, revived dramatically after 1656 with campaigns against Austria and Hungary, which culminated in the siege of Vienna, the imperial capital, in 1683. Leopold, so strongly threatened in the east, was in a very weak position to resist French ambitions in the west.

Countries in decline

Of the other states, the vast Russian empire was hardly, in the mid-seventeenth century, part of Europe at all. It had a large population and great unexploited natural resources but its army was inefficient by west European standards and its administration primitive. Russian foreign policy centred around its immediate neighbours, the Otto-





Above left: Louis XIV preparing to enter Dunkirk after the victory of his forces at the battle of the Dunes. This Anglo-French triumph of 1658 led, during the following year, to the peace of the Pyrenees which made it plain that France had replaced Spain as the leading European power.

Above right: a splendid equestrian portrait of Louis XIV as a young man.

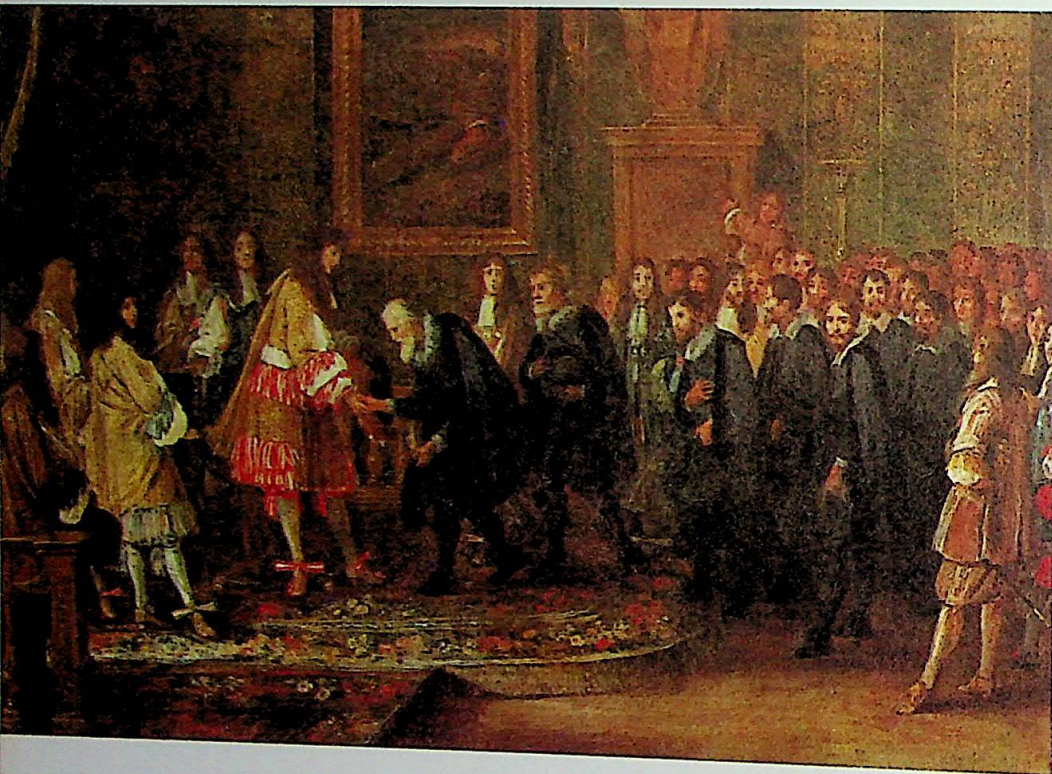
Left: an allegorical painting of the marriage of Louis XIV and the Spanish infanta Maria Theresa which was concluded to cement the peace of the Pyrenees of 1659. (All in the Musée de Versailles.)

man empire, Poland and Sweden. The vast Polish state was in decline, but Sweden, in 1661 the dominant country in the Baltic, was a great European power, a position which she had won under Gustavus Adolphus and in alliance with France during the Thirty Years War. In 1660, however, she lost a notable warrior king, Charles X, and a regency became essential for the four-year-old Charles XI. The main aim of the regency in foreign policy was to preserve Swedish dominance in the north. This determination led to tactical switches in Sweden's alliances in the 1660s, though the tradition of friendship with France remained strong. She did not have the ability, even if she had had the will, to undertake sustained resistance to French ambitions in the west.

The weaknesses of most of the European states appeared doubly dramatic when contrasted with France's intrinsic strength. France's population was about eighteen million, perhaps three times as large as that of England or Spain, and about eight times greater than that of the United Provinces or Sweden. Even the vast Russian empire had fewer inhabitants. France had other impressive natural resources, notably a fertile

soil, and in the early years of Louis' personal rule, under Colbert's direction, financial reforms and industrial development added to the country's strength. The army steadily increased in size, from under 100,000 in the early 1660s to nearly 400,000 during the war of the Spanish Succession. In addition, under the direction of two administrators of genius, Michel Le Tellier and his son, the Marquis de Louvois, its munitions and supply services were greatly improved and discipline in all ranks tightened up. Louis had, moreover, at the beginning of his reign, the greatest generals in Europe, Turenne and Condé.

There was no naval tradition in France comparable to her great military reputation, dating back to the Middle Ages. Colbert, however, resolved to make France a great naval power. He built dockyards, ordered French ships to be constructed at home rather than abroad and developed an elaborate bureaucratic machine for the government of the navy. By the time of his death France was almost ready to challenge England and Holland for control of the seas. Indeed, at the beginning of the war of the League of Augsburg in 1688 it looked



as if France might become the dominant naval power. This possibility was ended in 1692 at the battle of La Hogue, when the French under Admiral Tourville, were decisively defeated by an Anglo-Dutch fleet. The French navy never recovered from this blow and by the end of Louis' reign England had clearly outdistanced France as the country with the most powerful war fleet in the world.

The army and navy were, of course, Louis' ultimate weapons in international affairs, but he had one more subtle instrument. Like his army, Louis' diplomatic service was unrivalled in Europe. When he assumed personal power the foreign office consisted of a few clerks. By the time of his death it had become a large bureau with elaborate archives and a whole host of officials who supplied much of the information upon which royal policy decisions were based. Abroad, Louis kept permanent ambassadors in all the leading European countries except Russia and in addition, residents of subordinate rank in the lesser states, such as the German and Italian principalities. These representatives were on the whole capable and conscientious men.

No other country equalled France in the number or quality of its agents abroad, and no other country was able to provide its diplomats with the lavish subsidies which Louis distributed freely in order to win friends.

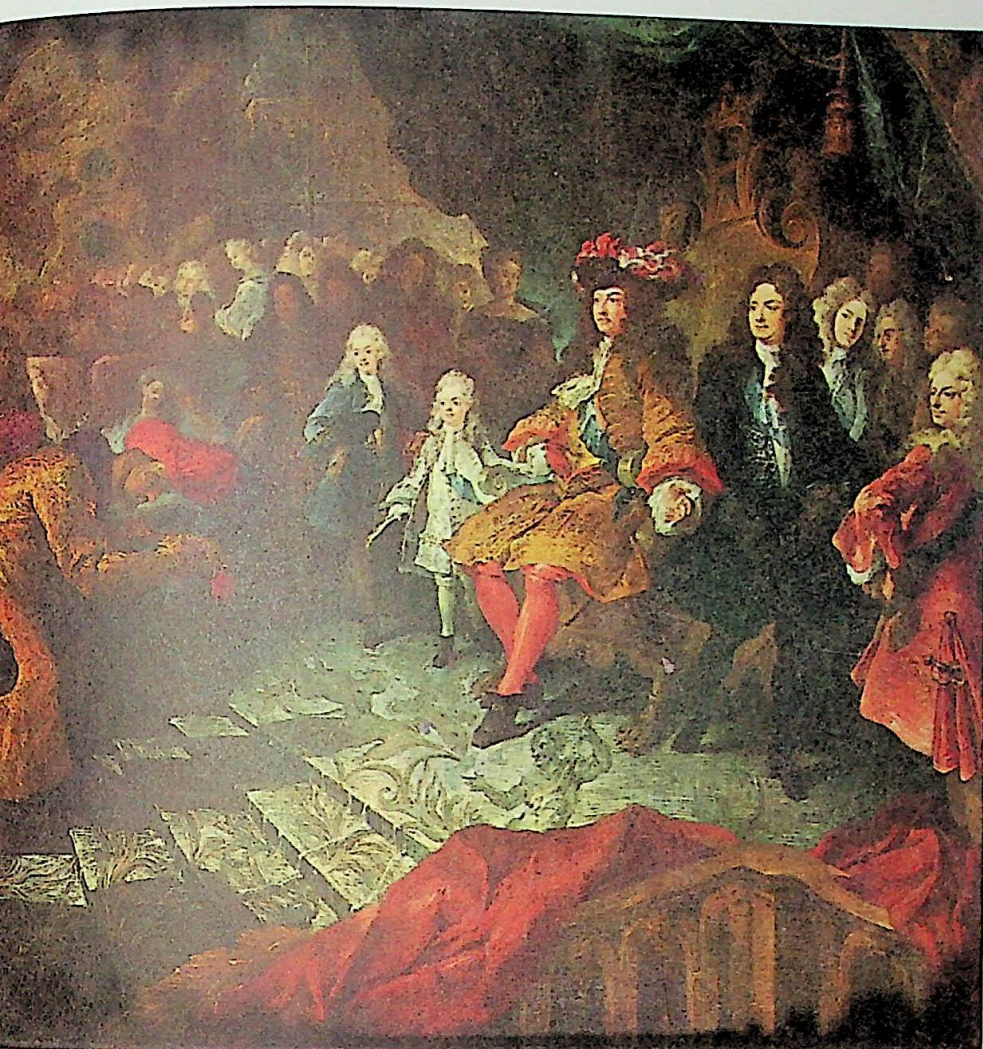
Glory for France

With these great sources of strength behind him Louis could confidently embark on an ambitious foreign policy. What was his real aim? It has been claimed that the issue of the Spanish succession was the pivot of Louis' whole foreign policy, but this question was all-important only in the later years of the reign. Other interpretations, such as that Louis' policies were determined by a desire to extend France to her natural frontiers or by a wish to increase French influence in Germany, are open to even greater objection. It may be more realistic to argue that Louis was, above all, resolved to reduce still further the already waning power of the Habsburgs. Such a view, however, neglects the obsessive determination with which he set out to crush the United Provinces in the early sixteen-seventies. It is

probable that the primary motive for Louis' actions was a desire for glory: glory for France, but, above all, glory for himself.

Louis' quest for glory and the reactions of the other European states to it can be followed in four wars—the war of devolution (1667–8), the Dutch war (1672–8), the war of the League of Augsburg (1688–97), and the war of the Spanish Succession (1701–13)—also in the 'reunions' policy of the early sixteen-eighties.

In the war of devolution Louis fought against Spain, in theory to safeguard the rights of his wife, the Spanish princess, Maria Theresa, to territory in the Spanish Netherlands, but, in practice, to win territory for France and military reputation for his armies and himself. He achieved considerable triumphs, first of all by isolating Spain internationally—a fine achievement this for his splendid diplomatic service—and then by winning notable victories in the field. These successes, however, alarmed England, Holland and Sweden, and in 1668 these three countries formed a Triple Alliance, designed to force France to make peace. Louis did agree to peace in 1668, though it is not certain how far the Triple Alliance



*In Louis XIV's reign France was the diplomatic centre of Europe.
Far left: Louis XIV receiving the representatives of the Swiss cantons at the Louvre in 1663. They had come to renew their alliance with France.
France's greatness was also appreciated in other parts of the world.
Left: ambassadors from the shah of Persia prostrating themselves before Louis XIV.
(Both in the Musée de Versailles.)*

influenced him. One thing is clear, however: he never forgave the Dutch for their intrigues against him. As a result of the war of devolution he gained a number of important towns in the Spanish Netherlands for France, and after 1668 he planned to extend still further French influence in the north east, this time by an attack on the Dutch.

He worked as hard in the years after 1668 to isolate the United Provinces as he had to isolate Spain in the period before 1667, and with almost equal success—Brandenburg was the republic's only ally in 1672. His and his diplomats' greatest triumph was the break up of the Triple Alliance. In 1670 by the Secret Treaty of Dover, a reflection of Charles II's personal views on foreign policy, England allied with France against the Dutch, and in April 1672 Sweden, in return for a subsidy, agreed to oppose any German prince who supported Holland. Louis was thus able, in 1672, to join England in an attack on the United Provinces in the knowledge that the diplomatic situation was decisively in his favour. With his huge army, some 120,000 strong and led by generals of genius like Turenne and Condé, he won a series of great victories.

The dykes are flooded

In the summer of 1672 the capture of Amsterdam seemed imminent: the very existence of the United Provinces was in the balance. At this point the republic saved itself by piercing the walls and dykes along the banks of some of its numerous canals and rivers and thus flooding a large area around Amsterdam. This brought a temporary respite to the Dutch and during 1673 and 1674 they obtained much needed allies. There was a virtual diplomatic revolution in these years as the other European powers, terrified by the prospect of a complete French victory, hastened to support the United Provinces. By the end of 1674 Louis was at war with the Emperor, Spain and most of the leading German princes. In addition he had lost the support of England. for in 1674 Charles II was forced by parliamentary pressure to make peace with the Dutch. As a result of these changes in the international scene Louis was forced to withdraw from Dutch territory and after 1674 waged war chiefly against the Habsburgs.

The war was brought to an end by a

series of treaties signed at Nymegen in 1678 and 1679. Louis obtained very favourable terms from Spain. The great territory of Franche Comté was confirmed as a French possession and, although several of the towns in the Spanish Netherlands which France had gained at the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle were restored, she obtained in exchange a string of other strongholds including St Omer and Ypres.

The treaty with the Dutch was much less to Louis' liking as he made no territorial gains at all from the republic. Very clearly, his objective of crushing the Dutch had not been realised. Nevertheless, the Peace of Nymegen probably represents the summit of his power and success in Europe. He had fought, in the later stages of the war, against a great coalition, yet his armies had never been beaten.

After Nymegen, Louis' confidence was high and he tried to achieve further triumphs by his 'reunions' policy. His idea was to exploit the vague wording of recent treaties, such as that of Westphalia, which, in ceding lands to France, often failed to make clear the precise limits of the territory granted. From 1679 onwards he set up a number of





'chambers of reunion', which assigned large stretches of territory in western Germany to France. By 1681 French sovereignty had been proclaimed over the whole of Alsace, including the city of Strasbourg. Louis also won important successes in the Spanish Netherlands, where he captured Luxembourg in 1684.

Spain, infuriated by French attacks on her possessions, had declared war in 1683, but she was much too weak to have any real hope of success. In 1684 she had to agree to a twenty years truce, by which France was left in possession of Alsace, Strasbourg, Luxemburg and some territory in Spanish Flanders. Spain had been unable to find allies against France because the general diplomatic situation in Europe was still favourable to Louis, though this was the last period when that was true. In 1683 the Austrian Habsburgs were fighting for their lives against the Turks and Charles II of England was a French pensioner. By the end of 1688, when the next great military conflict broke out in western Europe, the Emperor was winning notable victories in the east against a retreating Ottoman army. Above all, William of Orange had become king of England.

France's enemies gather

Between 1684 and 1688 Louis took a series of steps which could almost have been designed to unite his enemies against him. In 1685 his revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which had safeguarded the rights of French Protestants, infuriated all the Protestant powers of Europe. In 1687 he quarrelled violently with the pope over the conduct of the French ambassador in Rome, and in 1688 he tried to intrude his own candidate, Cardinal Furstenburg, into the important electorate of Cologne against the wishes of both pope and emperor. Moreover, he also invaded and devastated the Palatinate in support of the flimsy claims of his sister-in-law, the Princess Elizabeth Charlotte, to that territory. This final aggression led to the outbreak of war with the Emperor, and in 1689-90 a grand coalition was formed against Louis consisting of England, the Dutch, the emperor, Spain, Saxony, Savoy, Hanover, Bavaria and Brandenburg.

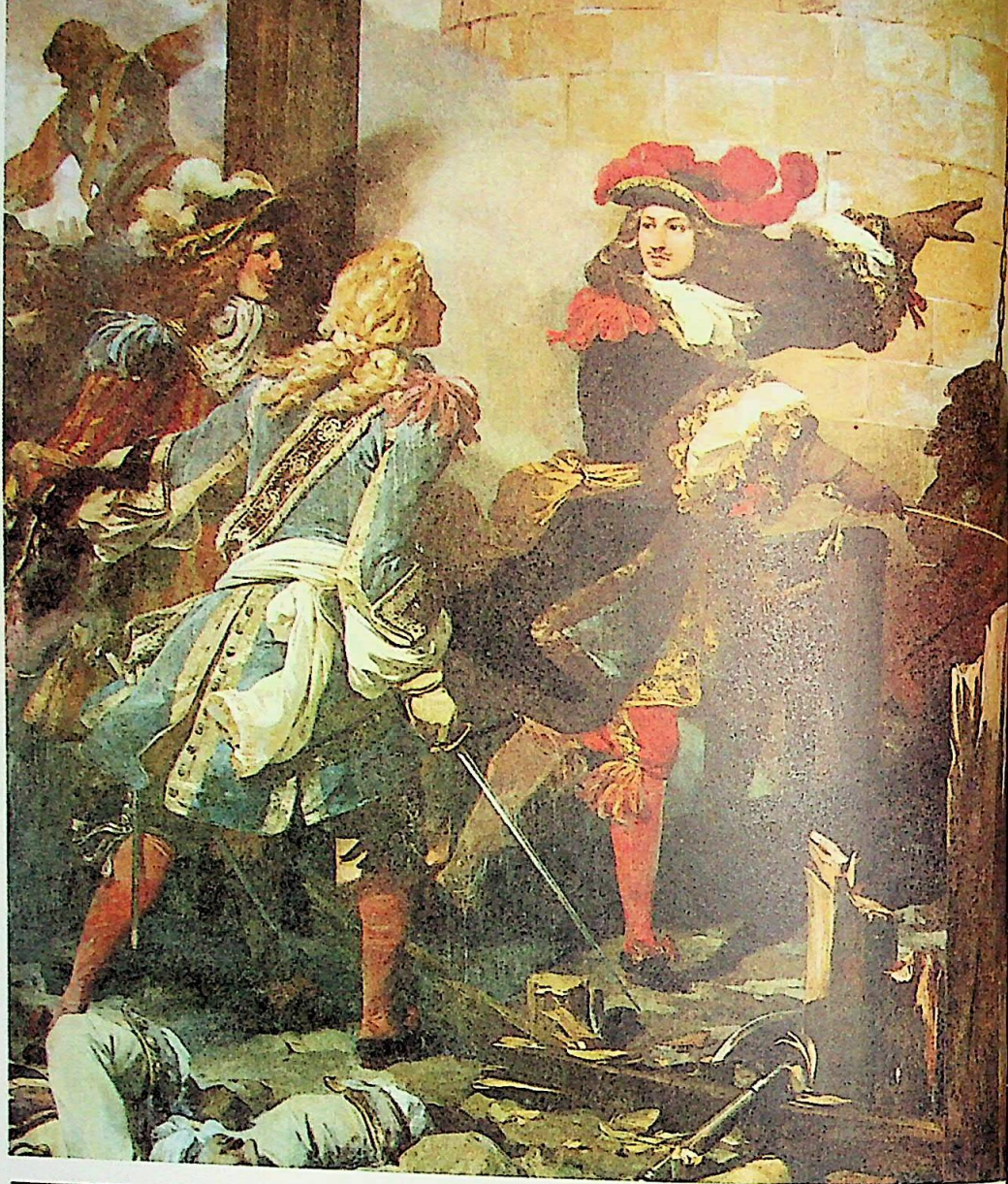
We cannot discuss here the details of the war, which was fought in Flanders, Germany, Italy and Spain as well as at sea. France won some notable military successes,

In the war of Devolution of 1667-8 the court accompanied the French armies on their march into the Spanish Netherlands. In this picture Louis XIV, on horseback behind the coach containing his wife Maria Theresa, is about to enter Arras in Flanders. (Musée de Versailles.)

but the naval defeat at La Hogue in 1692 marked the beginning of a permanent decline in her strength at sea while the bad harvest of 1693 brought famine and discontent at home. By 1695 it was clear that the strain of waging war against most of Europe was too much even for France and in 1697 peace was concluded at Ryswick. Louis made very great concessions, probably because the long expected death of the ailing Charles II of Spain seemed imminent and he was anxious to obtain a part of the inheritance for his son, the dauphin Louis. He agreed to give up all his reunions' acquisitions gained since 1679, except for Strassburg and the town of Landau, and to abandon his candidates for the electorates of Cologne and the Palatinate. He recognised William III as king of England, made considerable concessions to the Dutch, and agreed that they should be allowed to garrison, for their own protection, a series of border fortresses in the Spanish Netherlands.

The issue of the Spanish succession, uppermost in Louis' mind in 1697, dominated the remainder of his reign. Charles II of Spain had no children or brothers, but his two half-sisters—daughters of Philip IV by his first wife—had married into the reigning houses of France and Austria. The elder, Maria Theresa, had married Louis XIV, the younger, Margaret Theresa, the Emperor Leopold I. Louis and Leopold had further dynastic connections with the Spanish Habsburgs through their mothers, who were both daughters of Philip III. The French royal house and the Austrian imperial family thus had the best hereditary claims to the Spanish throne and as early as 1668 Leopold and Louis had signed a partition treaty providing for the division of the Spanish dominions between them on Charles II's death.

In 1698, however, after much haggling, France, England and the United Provinces reached a settlement by which the greater part of the Spanish dominions was to go to the electoral prince of Bavaria. He was a grandson of Leopold I but had little chance of inheriting the Habsburgs' hereditary possessions or the imperial crown. In this way it was made clear that Spain was not to be united with either France or the Empire. Louis did, however, obtain Sicily, Sardinia and the Tuscan ports for the dauphin, a splendid inheritance which would pass in due course to the French crown and make France a dominant power in Italy. It was also agreed that the Archduke Charles, Leopold's second son, should get the duchy of Milan. Such terms, it need hardly be said, were quite unacceptable to the emperor.





France's northern boundary, the most vulnerable of all its frontiers, was greatly strengthened as a result of Louis XIV's victories in his first two wars, those of 1667-8 and 1672-8.

Top left: the king directing operations at the capture of Valenciennes, taken during the Dutch war. (Both in the Musée de Versailles.)

Below left: Louis XIV at the capture of Lille in 1667.

On the right: Vauban, the greatest siege expert and military engineer of the century. He surrounded with magnificent fortifications the towns annexed to France as a result of Louis' triumphs in the north-east. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



The fate of an empire

Any slight chance which the arrangement of 1698 may have had of success collapsed in February 1699 when the electoral prince died. A few months later France, England and the United Provinces agreed on a second treaty, by which the Archduke Charles was to get Spain, the Spanish Netherlands and the Spanish Empire overseas and the dauphin was to obtain Milan (which he was then to exchange for the duchy of Lorraine) as well as the territory which he had been promised in 1698. The emperor, however, refused to accept these provisions—he feared the aggrandisement of France in Italy.

In Spain the treaty provoked an outburst of fury: Spaniards were indignant that foreigners should presume to settle the fate of their empire without even consulting them. Charles II himself was determined that the Spanish inheritance should be preserved intact. In October 1700, after much hesitation, he signed a will which made Philip, Duke of Anjou, second son of

the dauphin, his sole heir. If Anjou refused, the inheritance was to pass to his younger brother, the duke of Berry. If he too declined, it was to go to the Archduke Charles. Louis accepted the will on behalf of his grandson, but this decision did not immediately lead to a general war. The hostility of the emperor was certain, but the English and Dutch governments recognised Philip as king of Spain.

It was only a series of unwise actions by Louis—difficult to understand in the delicate diplomatic situation of the time—which led to the war of the Spanish Succession. He took measures to safeguard Philip's rights to the French throne, drove the Dutch from the barrier fortresses in the Spanish Netherlands which they had been allowed to garrison in 1697, obtained commercial advantages for France in Spain's American colonies, and, in September 1701, on the death of James II, recognised the Old Pretender as James III, king of England. War was officially declared in May 1702, though the French and Austrians had already been engaged in hostilities in Italy

since the spring of the previous year.

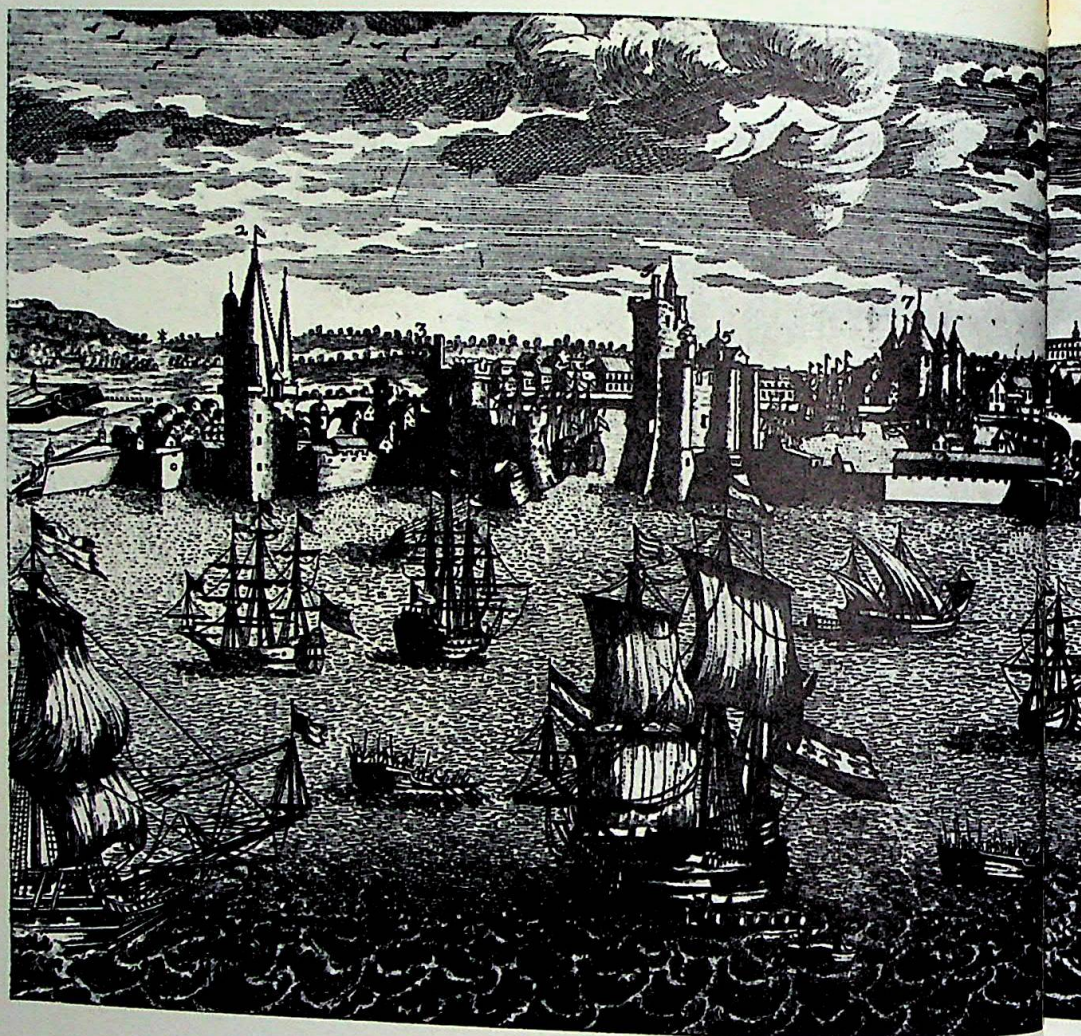
The odds were heavily against Louis in the conflict. His three main opponents, England, the United Provinces and Austria, had support from Brandenburg, Hanover, Denmark and the Palatinate, while he had the support of only Spain, Savoy, Portugal, Bavaria and Cologne. Spain was a liability to be defended against allied attacks rather than an asset, and in 1703 Savoy and Portugal changed sides. The latter's desertion in particular was a bitter blow for Louis. It gave his enemies a convenient land base from which to assault Spain, already vulnerable to attack from the powerful Dutch and English navies, which commanded the seas.

The French army, with fewer troops than the allies, had to conduct operations in Spain and Italy and along the whole eastern boundary of France. With such considerable commitments Louis had to stand on the defensive, an unusual posture for France. Moreover, for the first time in his reign, his opponents' generals were much better than his own. Marlborough and Eugene, the

Right: the port of La Rochelle, with Vauban's fortifications. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Far right: Louis XIV's army crossing the Rhine in the course of its attack on the United Provinces in 1672.

Below right: the French capture of Utrecht in 1672. (Both in the Musée de Versailles.)



principal allied commanders, demonstrated that they were soldiers of genius, whereas France, though she had distinguished service from Marshal Villars, no longer had officers of the calibre of Turenne and Condé. In 1704, at Blenheim in Germany, Eugene and Marlborough inflicted a crushing defeat on a large French and Bavarian army, the first really serious reverse suffered by France on the battlefield during the entire reign of Louis XIV. It was a portent of things to come. Further defeats in the Netherlands at Ramillies (1706), Oudenarde (1708) and Malplaquet (1709) reduced France to desperate military straits. To make matters worse the winter of 1708-9 proved to be of appalling severity in France and many peasants were faced with the threat of starvation.

A desperate situation

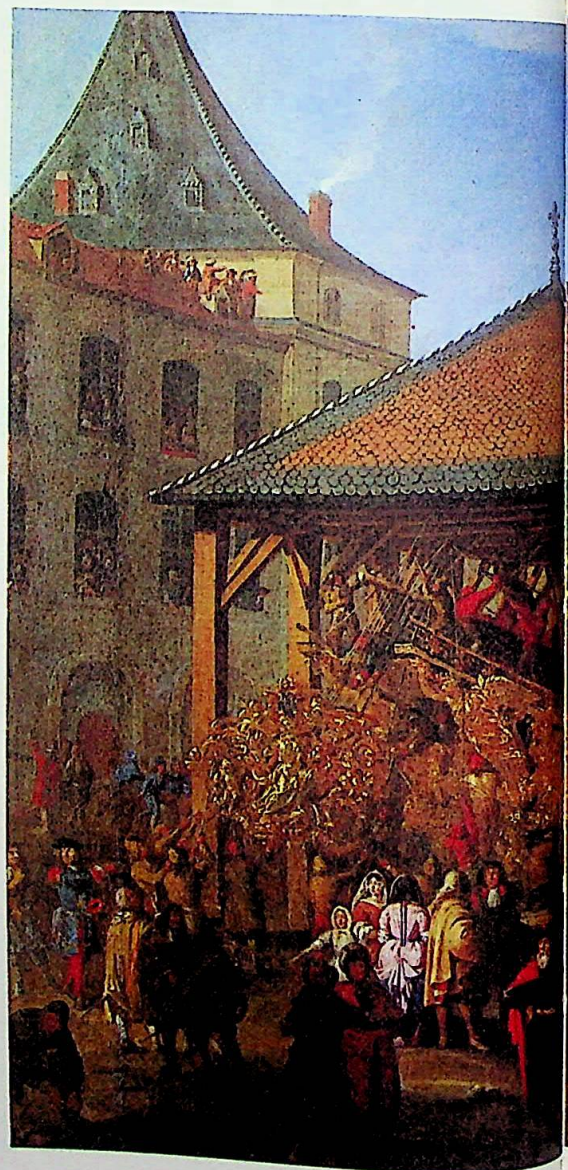
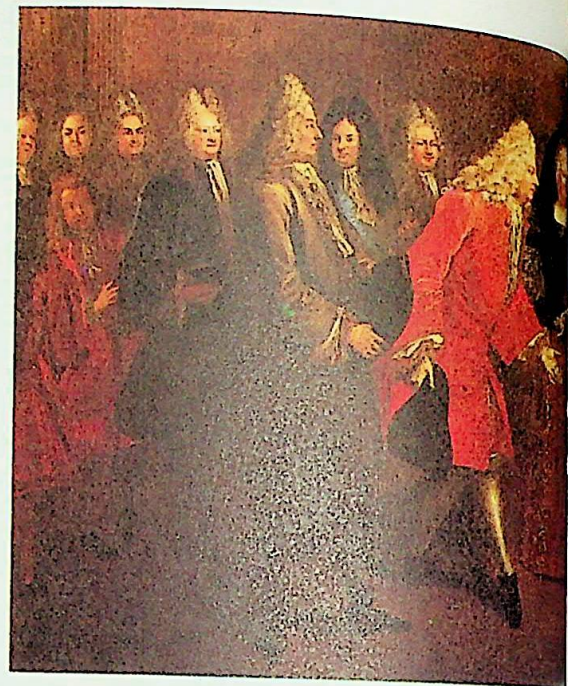
In this situation Louis was prepared to make almost any concession to obtain peace, but the allies' demand that he should provide military aid to help in the expulsion of his grandson from Spain was too humiliating for him to accept. The French nation rallied around him in this desperate time, and colossal efforts were made to raise new troops. The allies had overreached themselves: after 1709 prospects improved for France. Spain as a whole showed that it stood behind Philip V and was not prepared to accept an Austrian king. In 1710 a Tory government anxious for peace came to power in England. Above all, in 1711, on the death of the Emperor Joseph I, the Archduke Charles ascended the imperial

throne. If he was to be established as king of Spain as well, the whole balance of power in Europe would be seriously affected.

These developments and an important French victory at Denain in the Netherlands in 1712 meant that Louis was able to obtain more favourable treatment in the peace settlement of 1713-14 than would have seemed possible in 1709. By the treaties of Utrecht (1713) and Rastadt (1714) Philip V was allowed to retain Spain and the Spanish empire in the New World, although the Spanish possessions in Italy and the Netherlands passed to Austria. The Dutch right to a 'barrier' against France was confirmed. Louis recognised Anne as queen of England and made considerable commercial and colonial concessions to England in the New World.



When Louis died in 1715, therefore, he had the satisfaction of seeing his grandson established on the throne of Spain and of France than he had inherited in 1643—he did not lose in 1713 the territorial gains made as a result of his triumphs up to the sixteen-eighties. It is clear, however, that between about 1685 and 1715 the balance of power had swung strongly against France. In 1683–4, the years of the siege of Vienna leaving to his successor Louis XV a larger and the truce of Ratisbon, France had been by far the most powerful state in Europe and there seemed a real possibility that she might establish complete dominance on the continent. In 1715, because of her large population and great natural resources, she was still the strongest single power, but the reverses of the years 1688–1713 meant





On the far left: the great French admiral, Tourville. He commanded a fleet which grew dramatically in strength in Louis XIV's reign due to the work of Colbert. (Palais du Sénat, Paris.)

Above left: Louis XIV receiving the elector of Saxony at Fontainebleau in September 1714. The king had then reigned for seventy-one years.

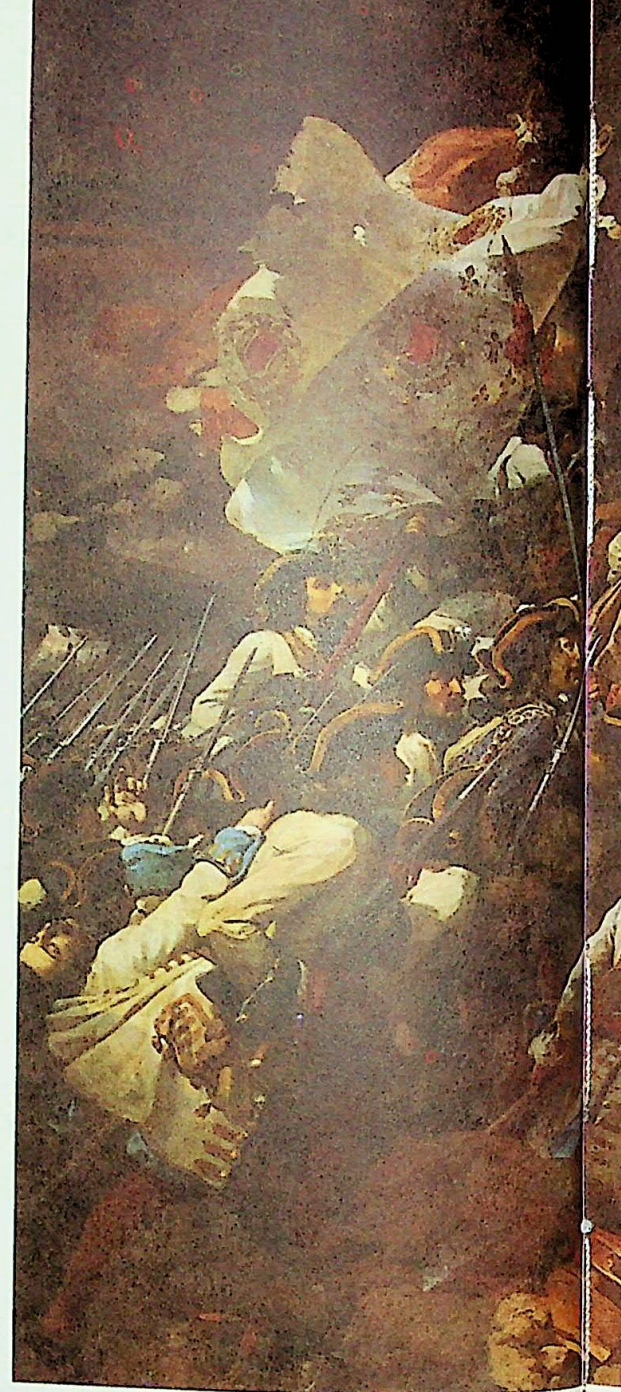
Left: the harbour at Marseilles and the great galley, La Réale, which had 320 oars. (Both in the Musée de Versailles.)



that she had ceased to threaten the very existence of her neighbours. Moreover, the treaties of 1713-4, together with the treaty of Nystadt, which brought the Great Northern War of 1700-21 to an end—(we will be examining the Northern War in a later chapter) marked the rise of England, Austria and Russia to the status of great powers, a position which none of them had really enjoyed in 1683.

The rise of England

In the early sixteen-eighties England, under Charles II, had been little more than a French tributary state. Between 1688 and 1713, however, under William III and Queen Anne, she had built up her strength at an astonishing rate and had been the paymaster of the coalitions which humbled Louis XIV. In 1715 she was certainly a power of the very first rank and by far the greatest naval power in the world.





In 1680 Austria, too, had been a comparatively weak state, controlling only a strip of Hungary to the east. By 1715 the position was very different. Following a series of brilliant victories against the Turks in the years after 1683, she had gained control of the whole of Hungary. In the west, as a result of the settlements of 1713-14, she obtained the Spanish Netherlands, Milan, the Tuscan ports, Naples and Sardinia. This was a vast accession of territory and population. In 1715 Austria, like England, was unquestionably a great power.

Russia hardly counted in the European states system in 1680, but by 1715, as a result of Peter the Great's victories against Sweden, she controlled the southern coastline of the Baltic Sea, a position confirmed by the treaty of Nystadt in 1721. In 1715 Russia was by far the greatest power in northern Europe and a great European power, though it was not until well on in the eighteenth century that the full impact of her new strength was felt in western Europe.

Among the other notable European states in 1715 the United Provinces was entering a period of relative political and economic decline, while Sweden, a great power in the 1680s, was well on the way to third rate status by 1715. Spain, under its new Bourbon dynasty, was to witness something of a revival in the early eighteenth century, but in 1715 was both poor and weak.

None of these changes, except the decline of Holland, and, perhaps, the revival of Spain, boded well for France. In the age of Louis XIV she was the greatest international power. In the eighteenth century other nations challenged her for that title.



For most of Louis' reign from 1688 onwards France fought against great European coalitions. She suffered severe defeats but also won some notable victories in the wars of the League of Augsburg (1688-97) and of the Spanish Succession (1701-13).

Left: the battle of Marsaglia in 1693, when Marshal Catinat defeated the duke of Savoy.

Far left: Louis XIV's grandson, Philip V of Spain. The duke of Vendôme won a notable victory on his behalf at the battle of Villaviciosa in Spain in 1710 (far left, above).

Above left: Villars' great victory at Denain in northern France in 1712 which strengthened Louis' hand in the peace negotiations leading to the treaty of Utrecht. (All four in the Musée de Versailles.)



France under Louis XIV

Louis XIV believes in his divine right to rule; centralisation and subordination; Versailles—the most splendid court in Europe; royal mistresses and a second marriage; the king exploits the rivalries of ministers; Colbert reforms finance and encourages trade; conflict between king and pope; the suppression of Jansenists and Huguenots; French cultural supremacy—the age of Racine and Molière.

In March 1661 Cardinal Mazarin died. He had been the most powerful man in France for nearly twenty years, a position he owed partly to the considerable abilities which he displayed as the heir of Cardinal Richelieu and partly to his influence over the Queen Mother, Anne of Austria, who seems to have fallen in love with him. While he lived the young Louis XIV did not play an important role in state affairs, but on his death, the king, then twenty-two years old, announced that henceforth he would be his own first minister. It was a promise he kept for the remaining forty-five years of his life.

Louis founded his government on two fundamental bases, a belief in hard work

and a firm commitment to the idea of the divine right of kings. He devoted up to nine hours a day to affairs of state and planned his work methodically. 'Give me an almanac and a watch', wrote the duke of Saint-Simon, the greatest memorialist of the reign, 'and even if I am three hundred leagues away from him I will tell you what the king is doing.' This devotion, day in, day out, to the routine details of government, allied to an excellent memory, soon gave him great self assurance in the making of decisions.

Louis, therefore, believed firmly that he should work hard at government. His task, as he saw it, was to increase his own glory

and the power of France. In doing this he would also benefit his subjects. Their role was to obey the king's commands without question. Louis' fervent belief in his right to rule as he thought best without interference from any human authority was one of the guiding principles of his life, and his reign saw the publication of the greatest of all statements of the divine right of kings, Bishop Bossuet's *Politique tirée des propres paroles de l'écriture sainte*, written to acquaint the king's heir, the dauphin Louis, with the true concept of kingship. 'Princes... act as ministers of God and His Lieutenants on earth. . . . The royal throne is not the throne of a man, but the throne of God



It was at the Congresses of Baden (on the far left) and Rastadt in 1714 that peace was signed between France and the Empire. It had already been concluded between France on the one hand and England and the United Provinces on the other at Utrecht in 1713.

Left: Louis XIV with the plans of one of his palaces. (Both in the Musée de Versailles.)

himself. . . . The prince may correct himself when he knows that he has done evil, but against his authority there is no remedy other than his own authority.' These words of Bossuet represent the ideas of Louis XIV.

A corollary of Louis' views on divine right was his belief in the necessity of rigidly subordinating every institution in the kingdom to the power of the Crown. This led, as we shall see, to a long struggle with the papacy over the rights of the Gallican Church. In secular affairs it meant efforts to strip of effective power all those bodies in the kingdom which might have imposed practical restraints on royal authority. The Estates General, the French parliament, was not abolished, but it was never summoned. The *parlements*, the supreme judicial tribunals of the kingdom, which had played a notable role in resistance to the Crown's authority during Louis' minority, were deprived of effective political influence by a series of edicts culminating in a decree of 1673. The governors of provinces, provincial estates (where they continued to

exist), and local towns were also deprived of many of the powers and functions which they had previously enjoyed and were increasingly subordinated to *intendants*, agents strictly controlled by the central government and sent to the provinces to impose its will there.

The splendour of Versailles

In the later stages of his reign Louis governed his kingdom from the great palace of Versailles which still represents the apogée of divine right monarchy and which was designed to provide a glorious setting for the king and his court. Louis did not like Paris, for it reminded him of the troubles of the Fronde, the French civil war of 1649-53, when a mob had once forced their way into his bedroom in the Palais Royal. Moreover, at Versailles he could indulge his love of walking and hunting to the full. The construction of the palace was a gigantic task. Versailles, wrote Saint-Simon scornfully, was 'the saddest and most ungrateful of all places, without a view, without woods or

water or good soil, for it all stood upon shifting sands or marshland.' Saint-Simon was always prepared to see the faults rather than the virtues in Louis' projects, but there is no doubt that the building of Versailles was immensely costly in human lives. Workmen died in their thousands of marsh fever. Their bodies, however, were removed from the local hospital at night and such unpleasant details were not allowed to interrupt the work of construction. This began on a large scale in the later 1660s when fundamental alterations were made to the small country palace which Louis XIII had built in 1634. Building and decoration went on throughout most of the reign and the palace, set in magnificent gardens, soon became a splendid setting for the court, which moved there permanently in 1682, although there was hardly any provision for sanitation. After the move Louis seldom visited his capital, though it was only fifteen miles away.

Awed foreign ambassadors marvelled at the rigid etiquette which prevailed at court.

Below: a splendid Gobelin tapestry depicting the marriage of Louis XIV and Maria Theresa (Musée de Versailles.)



Each nobleman and attendant had his appointed place and duties. The finest distinctions of behaviour were of major importance to the hundreds of notables who formed the core of the 10,000 or so courtiers, servants and guards who lived in and around the palace. Elaborate etiquette covered such interesting questions as who should hand the king his shirt when he was dressing in the morning and the exact conduct of different dignitaries when they met in public. Such behaviour was much more than an expression of royal pettiness of mind. It reflected the ordered hierarchy on which Louis' whole system of government was built. Each man had his superiors to whom respect was due and his inferiors from whom he could expect due acknowledgment of his position. Only the king had no peer. He stood alone under God.

60



Louis' private life at Versailles and earlier in his reign at his other palaces in and around Paris, revolved around his family and his mistresses. There were three great love affairs in his life, but his relationship with his wife, the Spanish princess Maria Theresa, whom he married in 1660, was not one of them. The queen adored her husband, but Louis, though he probably felt some mild affection for her, certainly did not return the feeling. He reserved his passion for his mistresses.

The king's mistresses

His first notable affair, in the 1660s, was with Louise de la Vallière, blonde and pretty in a quiet sort of way, but torn between religious scruples and her genuine love for the king. Few could find ill to say

of her. Even Saint-Simon spoke words of highest praise, describing her as 'modest, disinterested, gentle, good to the last degree, struggling unceasingly against herself.' In 1674, after she had finally lost the king's love, she took the veil and ended her life as Sister Louise-de-la-Miséricorde. She had been replaced some years before in the king's affections by the very lovely Madame de Montespan. With her fine blue eyes and splendid figure, the Montespan was a fitting consort for Louis during the triumphs of the 1670s, the decade of the Dutch war, which represented the high peak of his successes in Europe. She symbolised the high noon of his life, but her temperament did not match her beauty. She was spiteful and capricious and vented her temper even on the king himself. Louis confided his troubles to Madame Scarron, an attractive widow who



On the left: the sealing of official documents in Louis XIV's presence.
Below: the beautiful and gentle Louise de la Vallière, Louis' first official mistress. She was supplanted in his affections by the more dazzling and unscrupulous Madame de Montespan. (Both in the Musée de Versailles.)



The sole responsibility for deciding policy in both foreign and domestic affairs lay, of course, with the king. When he wanted advice he consulted the men who together formed the *Conseil d'en haut*, or Supreme Council. Before Louis' personal rule this inner council contained members of the royal family and great noblemen. After 1661 there were drastic changes. All those who might claim political power by reason of birth were excluded. Membership of the council, and with it the coveted title of minister of state, was granted to those whose advice the king considered worth having. There were only sixteen ministers in all between 1661 and 1715, three, four or five at any one time. A man became a minister when he was first summoned to the council by an usher. He ceased to be a minister when the summons no longer came. The council met two or three times a week, always under the presidency of the king. The ministers, with two unimportant exceptions, were all men of middling rank, ennobled by the king for their services to the state. This 'reign of the vile bourgeoisie', which Saint-Simon and the old nobility so bitterly resented, demonstrated the king's determination to be complete master of his kingdom and government.

Rivals for power

This determination can also be seen in the way in which Louis encouraged the rivalry of the two great ministerial families of Colbert and le Tellier which between them dominated the council for much of the reign. He regarded their rivalry as a guarantee of his own power. Between 1679 and 1683, for example, there were four ministers, Colbert and his brother, the marquis de Croissy, and le Tellier and his son, the marquis de Louvois. Their quarrels and jealousies ensured that the king had two independent and competing sources of information, ideas and advice. All his ministers from the 1660s to the 1680s were very able, some—Colbert, Lionne, le Tellier and Louvois—of quite outstanding capacities. The position was much less favourable towards the end of the king's life, when

had been employed to look after his illegitimate children. In 1680 he became completely alienated from Madame de Montespan after disclosures that she had dabbled in black magic. Within a year of the queen's death, which took place in 1683, he secretly married Madame Scarron, who is better known by her later title of Madame de Maintenon.

Besides his affair with Madame de Montespan, Louis had other, more fleeting liaisons in the 1670s, notably one with Mademoiselle de Fontanges, who was eighteen when she became his mistress in 1679. She was fabulously lovely, 'as beautiful as an angel' according to a contemporary who rather spoiled the effect by adding that she was also as 'stupid as a basket'. For a time the king seemed completely captivated, but when, after a year, she gave birth to a still-

born child and became very ill she was sent to a convent. Louis, who visited her there when he was out hunting, wept when he saw her condition. She died in March 1681, a sacrifice to the king's pleasure and to the primitive medicine of the day. After his second marriage in 1684 Louis abandoned his pursuit of women. Under the watchful eye of Madame de Maintenon and surrounded by his children—most of them his illegitimate offspring by la Vallière and Montespan—he prepared for a worthy and dignified old age. Madame de Maintenon exercised some influence on royal policy, but she was the only woman who ever did. None of Louis' mistresses had any say in state affairs and the king's relationships with them never prevented him from devoting full attention to the government of the country.

most of the ministers were unfortunately mediocrities.

The *Conseil d'en haut*, then, advised the king on the highest matters of state. Most of its members, however, also held one or more of the six greatest executive posts in the country. These were the offices of chancellor and controller-general of finances and the four secretaryships of state for foreign affairs, war, marine, and the royal household. The chancellor was the highest judicial officer of the realm, the controller-general of finances, as his title suggests, was principally concerned with state revenue and expenditure, and each secretary of state, besides his specialised duties, had general responsibility for a quarter of the provinces of France.

These six great officials were prominent figures on a number of other councils, less dignified than the Supreme Council, which were concerned with the general administration of the realm. The Council of Dispatches, which met every fortnight with the king in the chair, dealt with a mass of local government business. It was, in fact, the body responsible for the general internal administration of the country, and as such its principal members were the secretaries of state.

The importance of this council, however, must not be exaggerated. Its proceedings were largely formal, as the king decided almost all important questions in advance in individual consultations with each secretary of state in turn. Similarly in financial matters, Louis made his decisions after private discussions with his controller-general. The Council of Finances which held a meeting twice a week, performed what were largely routine duties.

There was also a 'Privy Council' under the presidency of the chancellor which was the supreme interpreter of law and privilege in the kingdom, and a Council of Conscience, responsible for religious affairs. The king's Jesuit confessors, especially Père la Chaise and Père le Tellier, held, in turn, important places on the latter body.

The decisions of the king and his councils at the centre were carried out in the provinces by the intendants who were by far the most important officials in local government during Louis' reign. The functions of the intendants were summed up in their full title: they were intendants of justice, police and finance'. As such they were responsible for preventing abuses in the administration of justice in the areas under their control, for superintending the maintenance of law and order, and for many functions in connection with the assessment and collection of the *taille*, the main direct tax in the country.

Colbert, the draper's son

Colbert, the man so largely responsible for creating the institution of intendant in its classical form, was by far the most important minister of the reign. He was the son of a draper and in his youth secured employment with a Paris notary. In 1640, when he was twenty-one, he took advantage of an uncle's marriage into the family of Michel le Tellier to enter army administration. In 1651 he transferred to the service of Cardinal Mazarin, managing the latter's household and business affairs with conspicuous success. Mazarin recommended him to the king with the remark that some of the debt which he owed to the Crown might be discharged in the person of Colbert.

Colbert won the king's confidence through his part in the destruction of Nicholas Fouquet, who in 1661 was one of the great powers in the kingdom as superintendent of finances, an office which gave him unrivalled opportunities for private profit at the cost of the state. Colbert showed himself utterly ruthless in a series of intrigues which led to Fouquet's arrest and trial, a trial which lasted for three years and ended in a sentence of banishment, which the king altered to one of life imprisonment. The office of superintendent was abolished on Fouquet's fall but Colbert exercised most of its powers and in 1665 his position was confirmed when he was made controller general of finances. He had other offices too. He became superintendent of buildings, arts and manufactures in 1664 and secretary of state for marine affairs in 1669. In fact he exercised influence over almost all internal affairs except for the army which was the province of le Tellier and Louvois.

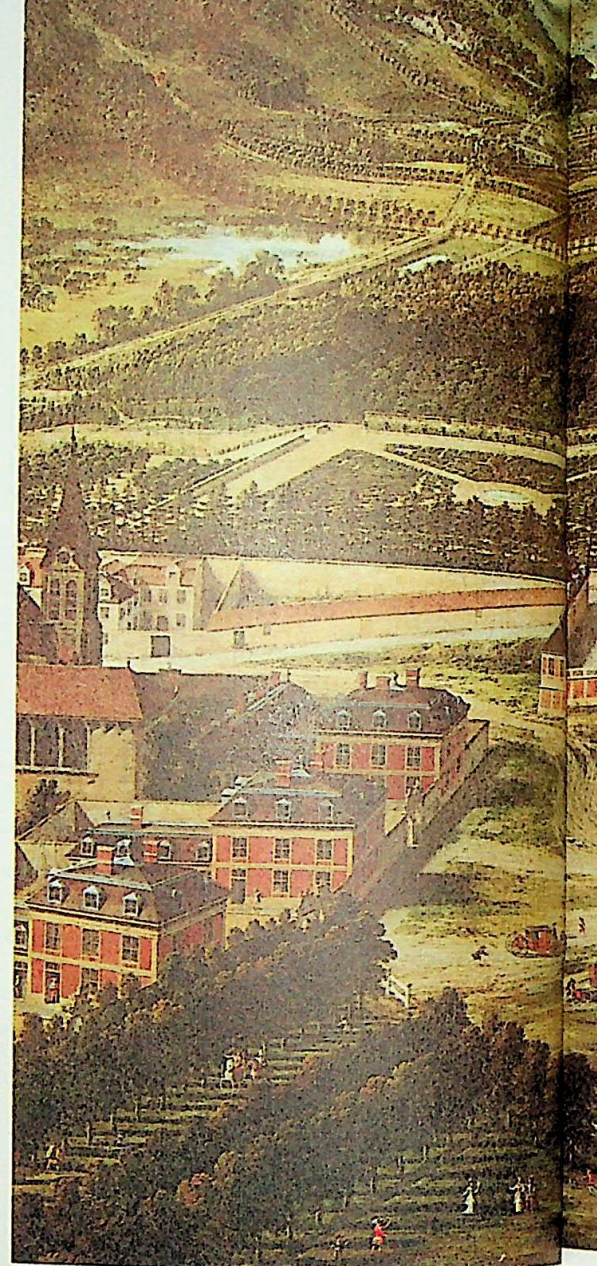
Colbert's aim was to promote the power and glory of France by increasing the revenue and wealth of the country. He intended to do this by financial reforms, by the application of mercantilist principles to trade and industry and by the improvement of communications within the country. He had a passion for statistics, realising that administrative reforms could best be based on a thorough knowledge of conditions in the country. In 1663 officials were instructed to provide detailed reports on all aspects of life in their localities which might possibly interest the government. In this way Colbert received a mass of information on military, ecclesiastical, financial and economic affairs.

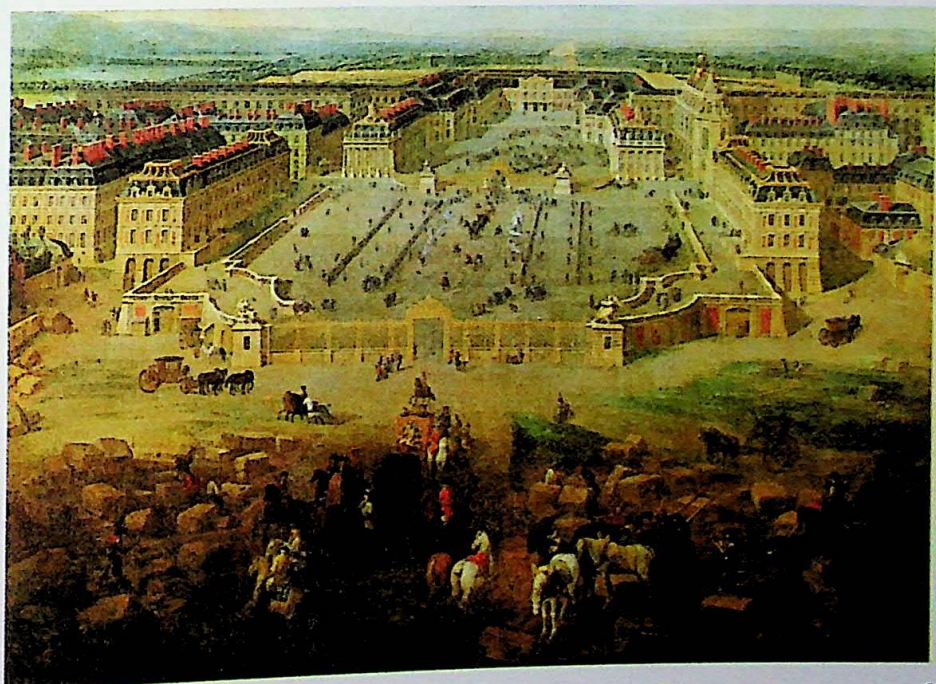
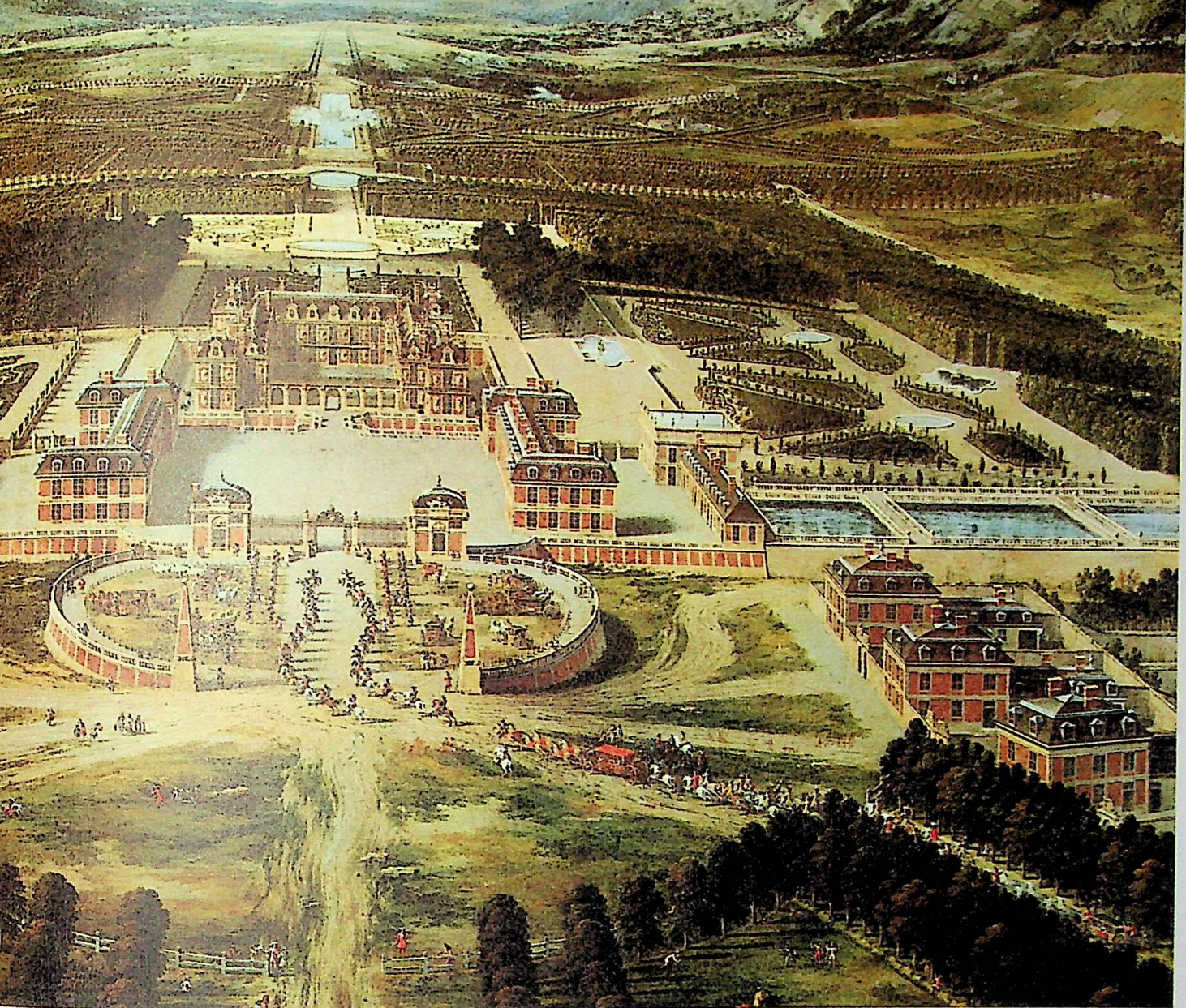
Top: Versailles before Louis XIV's main building operations.

Far right: the palace in 1772. Note the vast additions to the chateau.

Right: Le Vau, the principal architect of the palace.

Centre: Le Brun, who was in charge of the interior decoration. The magnificent gardens were laid out by Le Nôtre. (All in the Musée de Versailles.)







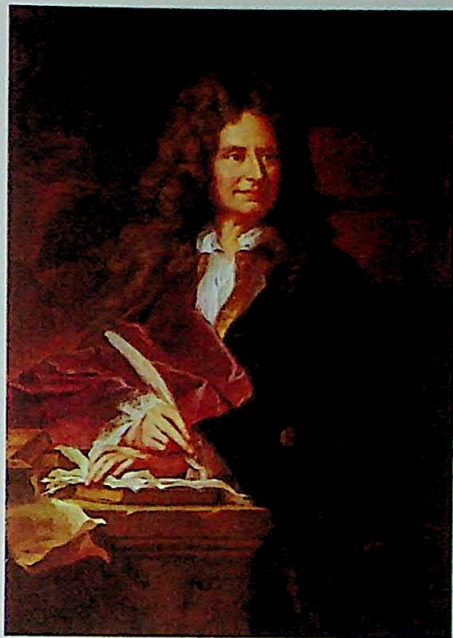
*Above: a troop of French and Italian players. (Comédie Française, Paris.)
In his early years the great French playwright Molière (right) was greatly influenced by Italian comedy. (Musée de Versailles.)*



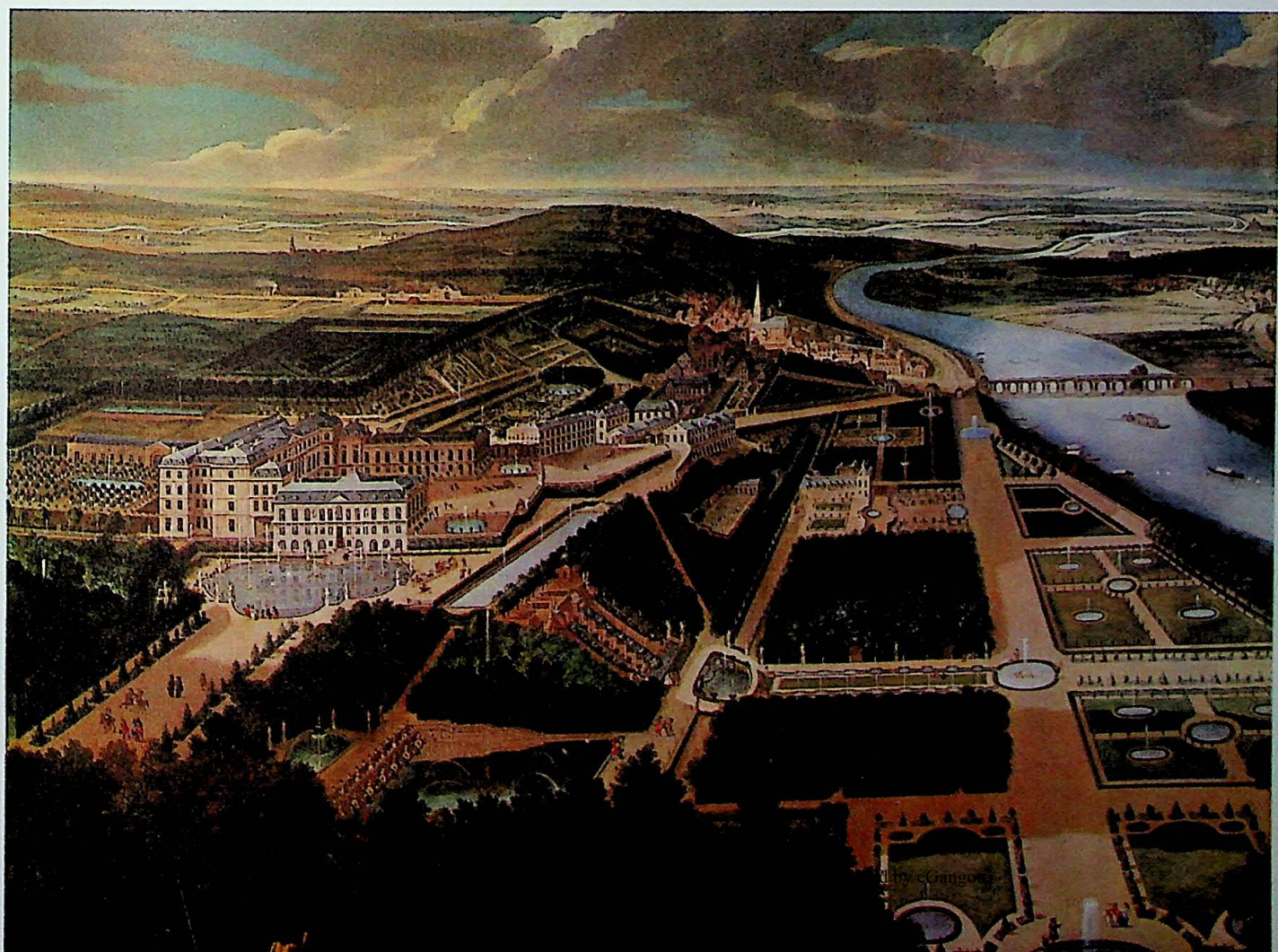


information which he used to good purpose in his reforms. He was, in fact, a protagonist of 'scientific' government, though the comparatively primitive nature of the statistics at his disposal meant that his calculations were open to very wide margins of error.

Colbert had very considerable success in the short run in increasing the effective revenue of the Crown. That was only thirty-one million livres in 1661, though the people paid eighty-three millions in taxation. Fifty-two millions, therefore, were lost in the process of collection, most of it going into the pockets of tax-farmers and tax-collectors. In 1667 the position was very different. Out of ninety-five million livres actually paid in taxation sixty-three millions reached the Crown. The net revenue of the Crown had, therefore, been more than doubled in six years, a remarkable achievement by Colbert. He brought about this transformation mainly by a series of administrative reforms. He reorganised the budgetary system, bringing some order into the previously chaotic treasury procedure. He compelled tax-farmers and tax-collectors to disgorge their illicit gains and exercised a close supervision over their profits, and increased revenue from the Crown lands by improving their administration.



*Above: portrait of Boileau.
Left: portrait of La Fontaine.
Below: Saint-Cloud, one of Louis XIV's
palaces. (All in the Musée de Versailles.)*



These and other measures were important but they were essentially reforms of detail. No attempt was made at fundamental changes such as compelling the privileged orders, the clergy and nobility, to pay their fair share of taxation, admittedly an almost impossibly difficult task. In these circumstances revenue could be expanded only within certain limits.

A financial disaster

The outbreak of the war of devolution in 1667 and above all, of the Dutch war in 1672 had a disastrous effect on Colbert's schemes. The need for large sums of money in a short space of time led to numerous financial expedients which hampered aims for increasing the prosperity of the country as a whole. In 1680, after peace had been restored and despite all Colbert's efforts, the net revenue was only sixty-one million livres against an expenditure of ninety-six millions. The great improvement achieved in the country's financial position in the first decade of the reign had thus been halted, and after Colbert's death in 1683 things became very much worse.

Colbert's mercantilism, which was the motive force behind his commercial and industrial policies, was founded on the belief that France could expand her economy only at the expense of her neighbours, particularly of the Dutch. It was this idea which led him to impose heavy duties on foreign imports, especially his celebrated tariff of 1667 which was virtually a declaration of economic warfare against the Dutch. He also took positive measures to increase French trade, by founding trading companies and encouraging the development of a French mercantile marine force. His four principal companies, the East and West India Companies, the Levant Company, and the Company of the North, all failed during his own lifetime under the stresses of the Dutch war and over-detailed regulation of their activities by the state, but he had considerable success in his more general efforts to expand French shipbuilding through generous subsidies to shipowners. The resulting increase in the size of the French merchant navy led to a considerable growth in trade with northern Europe, Spain and the Levant.

Colbert's tariffs, which raised the price of foreign goods coming into France to prohibitive heights, were designed to stimulate native French industries and thus make the country, as far as possible, self-sufficient. He provided other help for industrial expansion. He set up a number of royal factories, owned by the state, such as the famous Gobelins tapestry works in Paris. State ownership was particularly successful in luxury industries, but more important from the point of view of general industrial development were the subsidies, monopolies and interest-free loans which Colbert granted

to private entrepreneurs. By these means he greatly increased the range and output of French industry from textiles to mining, metallurgy and the production of armaments. A large part in this expansion was played by experienced foreign workers who were encouraged to bring their skills from all parts of Europe. Germans and Swedes helped to build up the mining and metal industries, Dutchmen played important roles in the development of textiles, and Italians helped to revive the languishing silk manufactures of Lyons. Colbert's efforts to stimulate industrial development had permanent significance. Despite setbacks which took place, after his death, in the later years of Louis XIV's reign, he had provided a basis for French industrial advances in the eighteenth century.

One means of assistance which Colbert provided for industry was his development of internal communications. The road system remained bad, but he did a great deal to improve river transport and build canals. His most famous project of this kind, the *Canal des Deux Mers*, linking the Mediterranean and Atlantic, was completed in 1681, two years before his death. These improvements in the transport system also benefited agriculture, which remained overwhelmingly the principal occupation of the people of France. Colbert did little else, however, to promote agricultural advance; industrial and commercial development brought quicker returns in revenue and international prestige than any agricultural improvements could possibly achieve.

Ruined by war

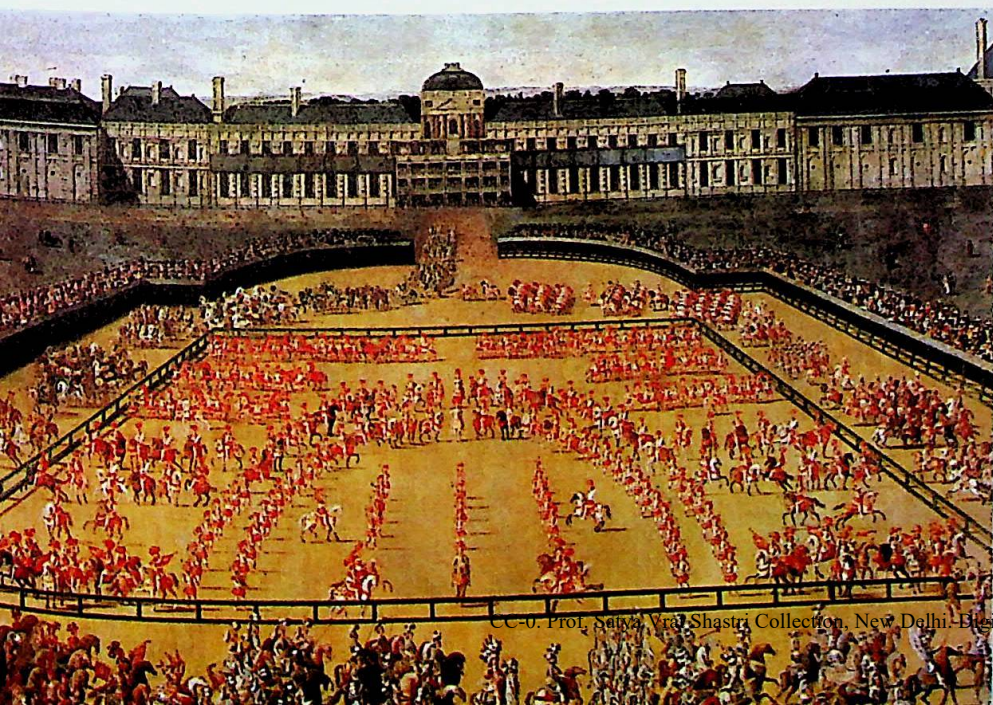
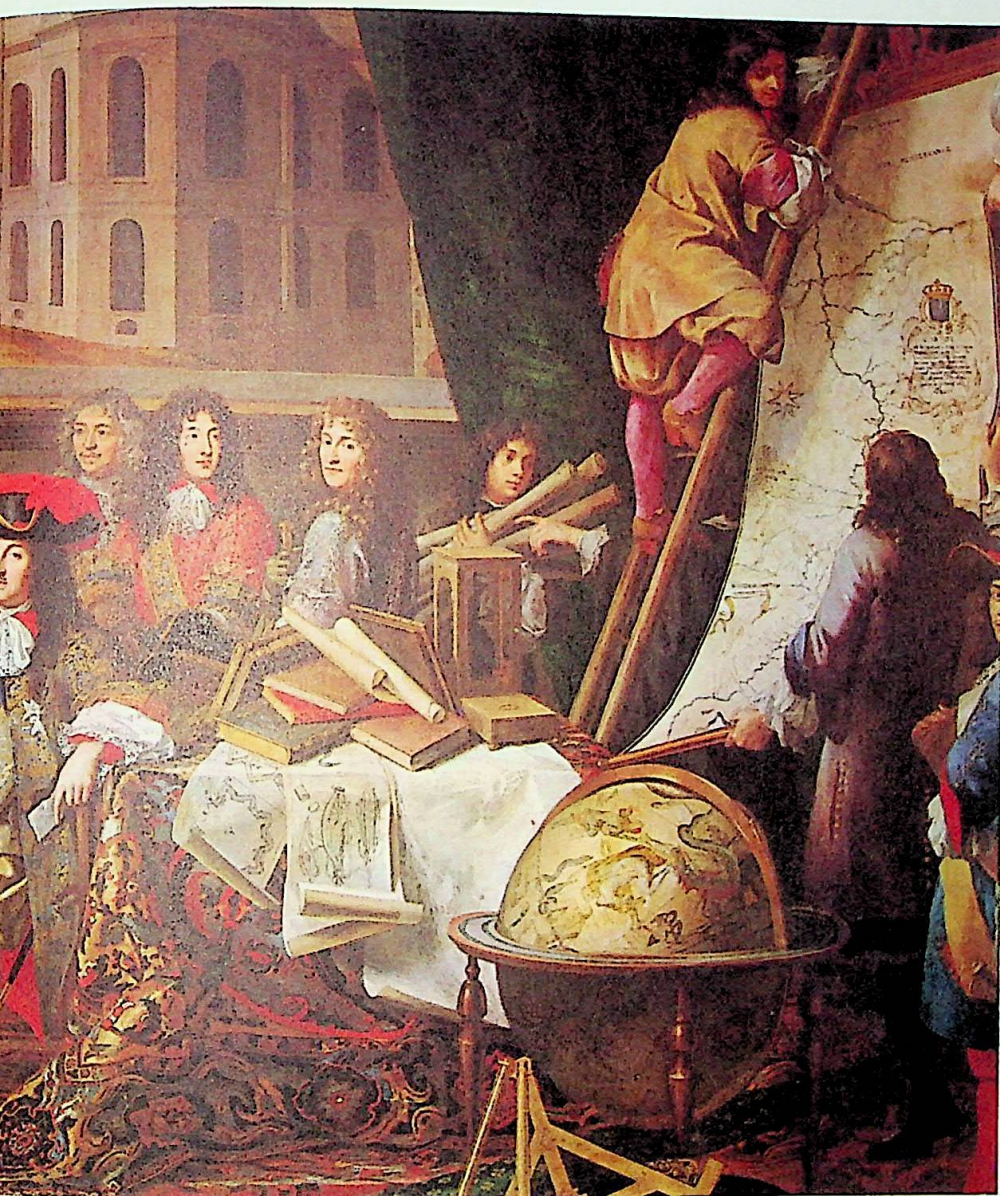
Overall, Colbert was a good deal less successful than he had hoped. His commercial and industrial policies did not make France the dominant economic power in Europe and his financial work was first undermined and then ruined by Louis XIV's wars. It would be wrong, however, to suppose that Colbert was irrevocably opposed to the wars which did so much harm to his plans. He realised perfectly well that his aggressive commercial policy might lead to armed conflict and he accepted the possibility. He really had little choice in the matter. He always remained the king's servant and Louis made his own decisions about war and peace. One must be careful, therefore, not to exaggerate Colbert's achievement. Equally, one should not minimise it. The stimulus which he gave to French trade and industry had an enduring effect: the economic development of eighteenth century France was built upon the work of Colbert in the seventeenth century.

During the years of Colbert's ministry religious affairs occupied a considerable part of the king's attention. Louis was faced with three major religious problems during his reign. These turned on his relations with



the papacy, on the role of the Jansenists in the French Church, and on the position of the Huguenots in France.

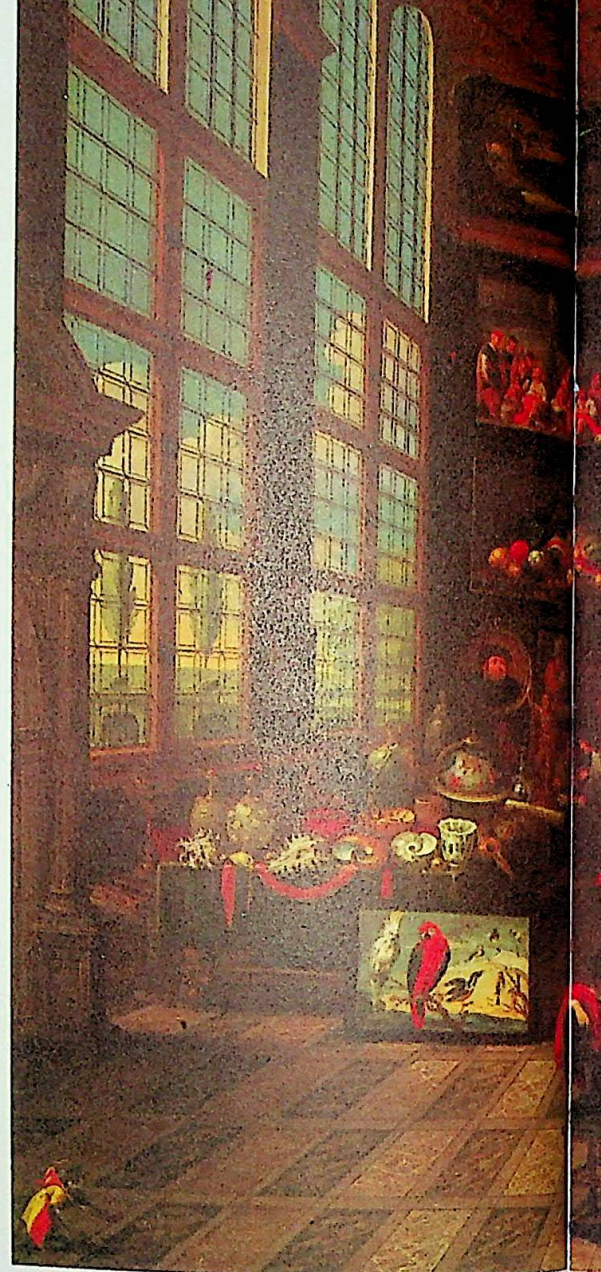
Louis was always a conventionally devout Catholic, indefatigable in his attendance at mass, but he claimed to occupy a position of semi-independence in ecclesiastical affairs which the papacy found difficult to accept. Traditionally the Gallican Church (the Church in France) held views about papal authority which were anathema in Rome, especially the idea that a General Council was superior to the pope. Gallican claims were stoutly defended by the lawyers of the *parlements* who maintained that papal bulls were not valid in France until they had been properly registered. Louis took up some of the traditional Gallican positions, rejecting others when it suited his book, in the course of a conflict with the papacy which lasted for much of the reign. The Crown had long enjoyed the right to receive the revenues of



Above left: Louis XIV surrounded by members of the Academy of Sciences, decides on the building of an observatory. Above: Colbert, who concerned himself almost as much with scientific and literary as with economic and political affairs. Left: a cavalry spectacle at the Tuileries. (All in the Musée de Versailles.)



Left: Madame de Sévigné, one of the greatest letter writers in history. Above: Fénelon, archbishop of Cambrai, who became a severe critic of Louis XIV during the king's later years. (Both in the Musée de Versailles.)



bishoprics in the north of France during vacancies—the so-called *régale temporelle*. In 1673, however, Louis extended the claim to the whole kingdom and also demanded the *régale spirituelle*, the right to nominate during a vacancy to benefices without cure of souls. Two bishops refused to accept the decree and four years later appealed to Rome, where they received a sympathetic hearing from Pope Innocent XI. Deadlock ensued, as neither the pope nor the king was prepared to give way, but in 1681 Louis summoned a General Assembly of the French clergy to consider the position.

The Assembly widened the split between Crown and papacy by voting the celebrated Four Articles, which were made an integral part of the theological teaching of the country by a royal order of March 1682. The first three asserted that kings were not subject to ecclesiastical authority in temporal affairs, that General Councils were superior to the Pope, and that the customs of the Gallican Church were inviolable. The

fourth admitted that the pope had the principal role in determining the content of the faith, but also stated that his decisions were not irrevocable if they did not meet with the assent of the Church as a whole. The pope was furious at these pronouncements and refused bulls of institution to their sees to those lesser clerics who had taken part in the Assembly and were later promoted to bishoprics by the grateful king.

Peace with the pope

In consequence, at Innocent's death in 1689, more than a third of the bishoprics of France were vacant. His successors Alexander VIII and Innocent XII were more conciliatory and in 1693 a compromise was reached by which the bishops who had taken part in the Assembly were confirmed in their sees after they had all sent letters of apology to the pope. Louis revoked his order that the Four Articles were to be generally taught throughout France, although the Articles

themselves were not formally withdrawn. The conflict over the *régale*, which had started the whole struggle, was allowed to lapse, although in practice Louis had the better of the argument as he retained some of the rights which he had claimed in 1673.

Louis' readiness to compromise in 1693 was partly due to his increasing piety in old age. He was more and more reluctant to be at odds with the head of the Church. Also, on a more practical level, he needed Papal assistance against the Jansenists, a body within the French Church, which caused the second main religious conflict of the reign. The Jansenists were named after a Flemish prelate, Cornelius Jansen, Bishop of Ypres, who died in 1636. Two years later came the posthumous publication of his book, the *Augustinus*, a commentary on the work of St Augustine, in which he claimed that men were so sinful that they could not co-operate with God in achieving their salvation but depended entirely on grace from on high. Thus, neither devotions nor good works



On the left: a gallery selling pictures and other objets d'art. (Musée du Louvre.)
Above: Racine, one of the numerous literary giants who graced the age of Louis XIV and the greatest tragedian of the period. (Musée de Versailles.)

helped to achieve entry into heaven. This teaching was very like the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and was fiercely assailed by other theologians within the Church, especially those in the Jesuit order. Both Richelieu and Mazarin attacked Jansenism and Louis continued their opposition. Under the influence of his Jesuit confessors he became firmly convinced that Jansenism was heretical and that Jansenists, suspected of believing in the legality of resistance to the Crown, were a political threat to his authority.

Already, before 1661, Jansenism had been condemned at Rome. In 1653 Innocent X declared that four propositions ascribed to the Jansenists were heretical and another one false. The Jansenists conceded the Pope's right to pronounce upon the orthodoxy of the propositions but at the same time denied that these propositions in fact appeared in the *Augustinus*. In 1656, however, Pope Alexander VII prohibited such evasions and Louis soon determined to

impose discipline. Between 1661 and 1664 he tried to do so at the convent of Port Royal des Champs situated near Versailles and the centre of Jansenist influence in France. The nuns, led by Mère Agnes Arnauld, a member of the great Arnauld family which provided the most notable leaders of the French Jansenist movement, refused to accept the papal pronouncements without serious modification. Many of them were expelled from the convent and a military guard was installed at Port Royal. These troops were, however, soon withdrawn, and in 1668, due to the efforts of the newly elected Pope Clement IX a settlement was reached which was in some ways a triumph for the Jansenists. They were merely asked to accept a formula renouncing the five condemned propositions 'sincerely' but not 'purely and simply'; that is to say, they were not required to admit that the heretical doctrines were to be found in the *Augustinus*.

The Jansenist dispute simmered down in the 1670s and 1680s under the influence of

this truce but flared up again in the last decades of the reign. This was largely due to the work of the theologian Pasquier Quesnel, who in 1693 published his *Réflexions morales sur le Nouveau Testament*, which displayed the unmistakably Augustinian trends in his thinking and became the new basis of Jansenist theology. In 1703 Quesnel was arrested in the Spanish Netherlands. He escaped, but his papers were seized and sent to Versailles. They revealed a highly organised network of Jansenist sympathisers within France with whom Quesnel had corresponded for almost a decade.

A secret conspiracy

This evidence, with its suggestions of a secret conspiracy, confirmed all Louis' old suspicions of the Jansenists and in 1705 he obtained a bull from Clement XI which ordered the complete and unequivocal acceptance of all papal condemnations of Jansenism. The nuns of Port Royal des



Champs, however, refused compliance without their customary qualifications. In 1709 they were forcibly removed and dispersed among hostile convents. The following year the king ordered the Port Royal buildings to be razed to the ground. It was a petty act, and he followed it up by obtaining from the Pope in 1713 the celebrated bull *Unigenitus* which defined and condemned as heretical 101 propositions from Quesnel's *Réflexions*.

The king did not succeed in extirpating Jansenism by these severe measures. Moreover, in his efforts to suppress it he had depended more and more on papal support. In doing so he weakened his own claims and those of the French Church to a large measure of independence from Rome.

The Jansenists at least claimed to be good Catholics, even though their opponents regarded them as heretics. The French Huguenots, on the other hand, were openly separated from the Mother Church, and as such were an obvious offence to a motto which Louis made his own: 'one king, one law, one faith.' There were between one and two million Huguenots in France. They were among the most valuable and industrious of





On the far left: Saint-Cyr, the school founded in 1685 by Madame de Maintenon for poor girls of noble family. In this picture they are being trained in the domestic arts. (Musée Carnavalet, Paris.)
Left: Madame de Maintenon, whom Louis XIV married shortly after the Queen's death. (Musée de Versailles.)
Below left: the solemn opening by Louis XIV of the Hôtel des Invalides, designed, as the name suggests, for soldiers wounded during his wars. (Musée Carnavalet.)

all the king's subjects, being particularly numerous among the financial, commercial and industrial sections of the population. In 1598, by the Edict of Nantes, which brought the French religious wars to an end, they had been granted permission to worship freely in many places throughout France and the right to hold all offices open to other citizens. They were also allowed to garrison several towns as a guarantee that these terms would be observed. In 1629 Richelieu deprived them of this last privilege but confirmed their other rights. During Louis' minority, at the time of the disturbances of the Fronde, they proved by their passivity that they were no longer any danger to the internal peace of France.

At first the king's attitude towards the Huguenots was moderate. He had high hopes that persuasion, especially financial inducements, would wean many of them away from their faith, and in 1676 an office known as the *caisse des conversions* was set up to give financial help to converts to Catholicism. This had some success, but after the end of the Dutch war Louis, motivated largely by a desire to show that his

quarrels with the pope made no difference to his unimpeachable orthodoxy, decided to apply harsher measures against the Huguenots. Between 1679 and 1685 they were subjected to open persecution. Their churches were destroyed, their schools were closed down, and they themselves were deprived of state offices and civil rights.

From 1681 onwards physical violence was used against the Huguenots. Under the influence of Louvois it was decided to billet dragoons upon Protestant families in order to secure their conversion. The soldiers were told to make their stay as unpleasant as possible and torture was sometimes employed to persuade those who were reluctant to accept the Catholic faith. These methods were very influential in securing 'conversions.' Thirty thousand a year were made in Poitou where the policy was enforced with particular ruthlessness. Finally, in October 1685, by the Edict of Fontainebleau, Louis formally revoked the Edict of Nantes. All Protestant churches were to be destroyed, public and private worship by Huguenots was prohibited and Protestant ministers were ordered to leave the country within

fifteen days. A solemn *Te Deum* was held at Rome to celebrate the revocation and the French clergy, headed by Bossuet, spoke of the king's action in terms of immoderate praise. The Protestant powers of Europe took a very different view; there was a tremendous revulsion of feeling against France in countries such as England and Brandenburg.

Driven into exile

The economic consequences of the revocation of the Edict are less easy to assess. Although laymen were forbidden to emigrate, about 200,000 managed to leave France. They settled in many parts of Europe, especially in the United Provinces, England and Brandenburg. It used to be thought that their departure had a disastrous economic effect upon France, but recent research has tended to produce a rather different picture. The French economy in the latter part of Louis' reign was depressed by a complex series of factors such as unwise fiscal policy, wars, famines, and currency revaluations. Among these the emigration of the

Huguenots was probably only of secondary significance, even in the short term. Nevertheless, the exiles did enrich with their skills the countries where they found refuge and all Louis' persecutions within France after 1685 could not completely stamp out Protestantism there. Huguenots continued to meet for secret worship and were a thorn in the government's side during the war of the Spanish Succession when they conducted a guerrilla campaign in the Cevennes which had to be suppressed with the use of regular French troops—the terrible war of the Camisards.

The Edict of Fontainebleau may have had less disastrous economic consequences for France than was once supposed, but the decade when it was issued, the years of the sixteen-eighties, were surely the turning point in Louis' reign. The victories of the Habsburgs against the Turks and William III's accession to the English throne radically changed the international situation, greatly to France's disadvantage, and the wars of 1688 to 1713 which followed had disastrous financial consequences for Louis' government. At the end of the war of the Spanish Succession annual expenditure exceeded receipts by forty-five million livres. Above all, at the end of the reign there was a debt of some 3,000,000,000 livres compared with one of about 60,000,000 in 1661. France was on the brink of bankruptcy as a result of the king's ambitions.

In other respects as well, the last thirty or so years of the reign were a time of gathering gloom for Louis and his people. As the king became more and more devout after his marriage to Madame de Maintenon in 1684 the whole atmosphere of the court changed. The gaiety of the earlier days was replaced by a stately sobriety which made a more suitable background for the domestic tragedies which afflicted both France generally and the king personally from the sixteen-nineties onwards.



Louis XIV persecuted the Huguenots while at the same time trying to defend and extend the administrative independence of the French Church.

Above: a Protestant engraving which shows the intendant Marillac, one of the most notorious persecutors of the Huguenots surrounded by instruments—such as the wheel, the galleys, and prison—designed to 'persuade' Protestants to adopt the Catholic faith.

On the right: Louis XIV receiving the papal nuncio. (Both Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)





Misery for the peasants

In seventeenth century France the life of the average peasant was precarious in the extreme. It has been estimated that hunger and even possible starvation was a constant threat for over 75 per cent of the population, a threat which rapidly became a reality in times of economic depression and bad harvests. The later seventeenth century was a time of prolonged agricultural depression and conditions became disastrous in 1693-94 and 1709-10. In these years, just when the country was fighting against European coalitions, bad harvests brought serious famine. Thousands of Frenchmen died of starvation: sometimes the population of villages was reduced by as much as a quarter. This was the harsh reality of life for the average man during the *grand siècle*.

In the midst of these trials the king suffered a series of appalling personal losses. Three dauphins of France died within twelve months: his only legitimate son Louis, the 'Grand Dauphin', of smallpox in 1711, and his eldest grandson the duke of Burgundy and Burgundy's elder son, both of measles, in 1712. Burgundy's younger son, the future Louis XV, was probably only saved by the good sense of his nurse, who hid him away from the tender mercies of the doctors, who were preoccupied with his elder brother. Burgundy's wife, Marie Adelaide, the acknowledged darling of both the king and the court also succumbed to measles in 1712, and in 1714 another of Louis' grandsons, the duke of Berry, died. The king showed a dignity amid his sorrows which even Saint-Simon felt compelled to praise. Now, as never before, wrote the duke, did Louis deserve the title of 'great'.

The king faced his trials amidst mounting criticism of his rule. He had few distinguished servants to help him in later years—Torcy, a nephew of Colbert, was the only great minister at the end of the reign—and

many contemporaries laid the failures of the end of the century squarely at the king's own door. A sign of the times was *Télémaque*, a remarkable book by Fénelon, archbishop of Cambrai, which was published in 1699 and attacked the very bases of political autocracy. Louis died on 1 September, 1715 after a painful illness, which he bore with great resolution. He said farewell to what remained of his family, thanked his ministers for their services and received the consolations of the church with all the signs of piety. He had reigned over seventy-two years and had brought France to a very high peak of international power and influence.

A magnificent age

It may be, however, that the true greatness of Louis' reign lies in the art and literature which the country then produced. Versailles, the great monument of the period, was a mixture of baroque exuberance and classical restraint which captured the imagination of Europe and has continued to fascinate the world. Few today might agree with the suggestion that by its construction Louis more than compensated for all the miseries which he imposed on Europe by his aggressions, but it is certain that no man has ever left a more splendid or more characteristic monument. In the field of literature the earlier years of the personal rule, the period from about 1660 to 1690 produced some of the great masterpieces of French and indeed of world literature. We think of Molière's comedies and Racine's tragedies, of Madame de Sévigné's *Letters* and la Fontaine's *Fables*, of Bossuet's sermons and Boileau's poetry, and of many other works.

France in the age of Louis XIV certainly produced the greatest literature in the Europe of the time and the language in which that literature was expressed was one of the most effective instruments of French influence throughout the continent. The





Portrait of Louis XIV at the age of sixty-eight. (Musée de Versailles.)

French tongue rose during the seventeenth century to the position of an international language, though its supremacy was only fully displayed during the eighteenth. Indeed, in the seventeenth century France became the arbiter of European taste, the great model for polite society almost everywhere.

The most permanent effects of Louis XIV's reign, then, lay in the cultural field. The supremacy of French manners and fashions in eighteenth century Europe was not matched by a corresponding political

supremacy. France, the strongest power in Europe when Louis began his personal rule in 1661, remained the most powerful single state at his death in 1715. It was then clear, however, that she could not hope to win the *dominant* position which had seemed within her grasp in the later 1670s and early 1680s. In the eighteenth century, before the revolutionary and Napoleonic interludes, her international power declined compared to that of Britain and Russia. In domestic affairs, Colbert's measures to build up French commerce and industry provided a

basis for later economic growth, but nothing was done to deprive the nobility of their social privileges, and poverty, sometimes actual starvation, was the lot of the rural masses. Above all, on Louis XIV's death the Crown was burdened with a gigantic debt, largely the result of his wars. It never really overcame that burden in the eighteenth century. The causes of the French Revolution, which had its origins in financial crisis, can and should be traced back to the reign of Louis XIV.

FRANCE UNDER LOUIS XIV

Domestic Affairs	Foreign Affairs	Rest of Europe
1660		
Death of Mazarin (1661)	Marriage of Louis and Maria Theresa (1661)	Restoration of Charles II (1660)
Beginning of Louis XIV's personal reign		
Disgrace of Fouquet	Occupation of Lorraine (1663)	Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665)
<i>Parlement</i> loses its right to criticise edicts (1661)	War of Devolution (1667-8)	
Colbert controller-general of finance (1665)	Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (1668)	Triple Alliance (1668)
Louvois made minister (1672)	War with Holland (1672-8)	
	Treaty of Nymegen (1679)	William III stadtholder of the United Provinces (1672)
1680		
Beginning of the <i>dragonnades</i> (1681)		Peter the Great becomes tsar (1682)
Death of Colbert (1683)	War with Spain (1683)	
Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685)	War of the League of Augsburg (1689-97)	Accession of James II (1685)
Death of Louvois (1691)	Battle of La Hogue (1692)	Glorious Revolution (1688)
	Treaty of Ryswick (1697)	Charles XII king of Sweden (1697-1718)
1700		
Destruction of Port-Royal	War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13)	Founding of St Petersburg (1703)
Death of the Dauphin (1711)	Battle of Malplaquet (1709)	Act of Union between England and Scotland (1707)
Death of Louis XIV (1715)	Treaties of Utrecht and Rastadt (1713-14)	Accession of George I (1714)
1715		

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The 'Time of Troubles' was brought to an end by the accession of Michael Romanov (far left) to the Russian throne in 1613. He was succeeded in 1645 by his son Alexis (above). Alexis died in 1676, when his eldest son Fedor (left), half-brother of Peter the Great, ascended the throne. (All in the History and Reconstruction Museum, Moscow.)

The Russia of the Romanovs

The accession of the Romanovs; the growth of central authority; Russian peasants reduced to serfdom; influences from the West; conflict with Sweden and Poland; the achievement of Peter the Great; Russia a European power.

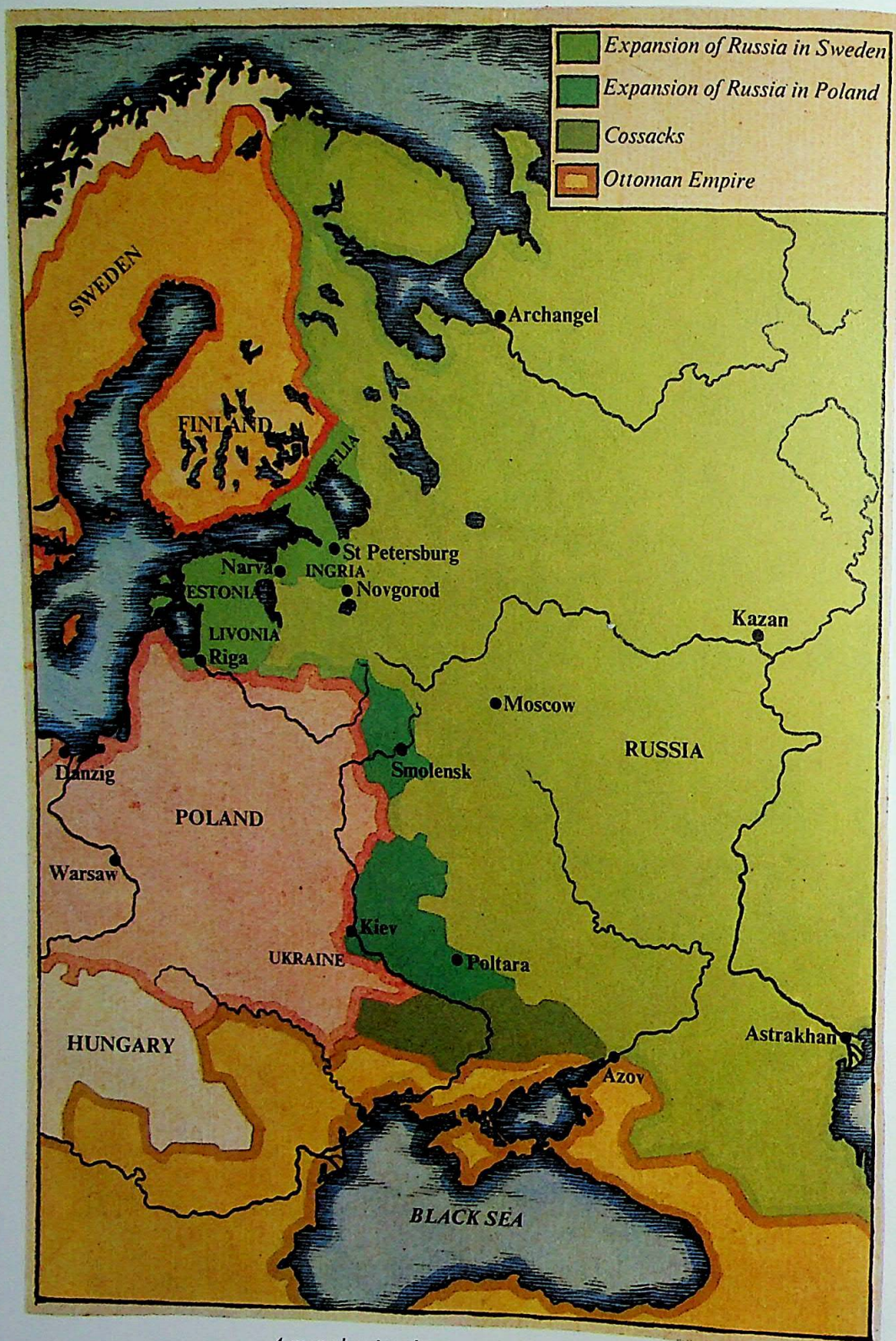
Throughout the seventeenth century observers from the West found it difficult to think of Russia as part of Europe. Accounts of the country by foreign travellers and diplomats were almost unanimous in emphasising its 'Asiatic' aspects, such as the arbitrary and despotic form of government, and the subjection of women and their

virtual exclusion from society. The obverse of the almost unlimited power of the ruler, the complete subjection of the Russian people, reinforced this impression of an oriental despotism.

By 1600 the idea of the 'slave-born Muscovite' was firmly enshrined in English literature—the phrase occurs in Sir Philip

Sidney's poem *Astrophel and Stella*. Such ideas symbolised the fact that the new Romanov dynasty, which came to power in the early seventeenth century, occupied the throne of a country which seemed barbarous to the more sophisticated nations of western Europe.

The election of Michael Romanov to the



A map showing the expansion of Russia under Alexis I and his son, Peter the Great, at the expense of Poland and Sweden. Poland, a prey to its powerful neighbours, virtually ceased to be an independent country in the second part of the seventeenth century. Russia's final victory over Sweden in the Northern War (1700-21) confirmed its arrival on the European scene as a great power and marked the decline of Sweden.

Right: a Muscovite knight of the latter half of the sixteenth century. From a print. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

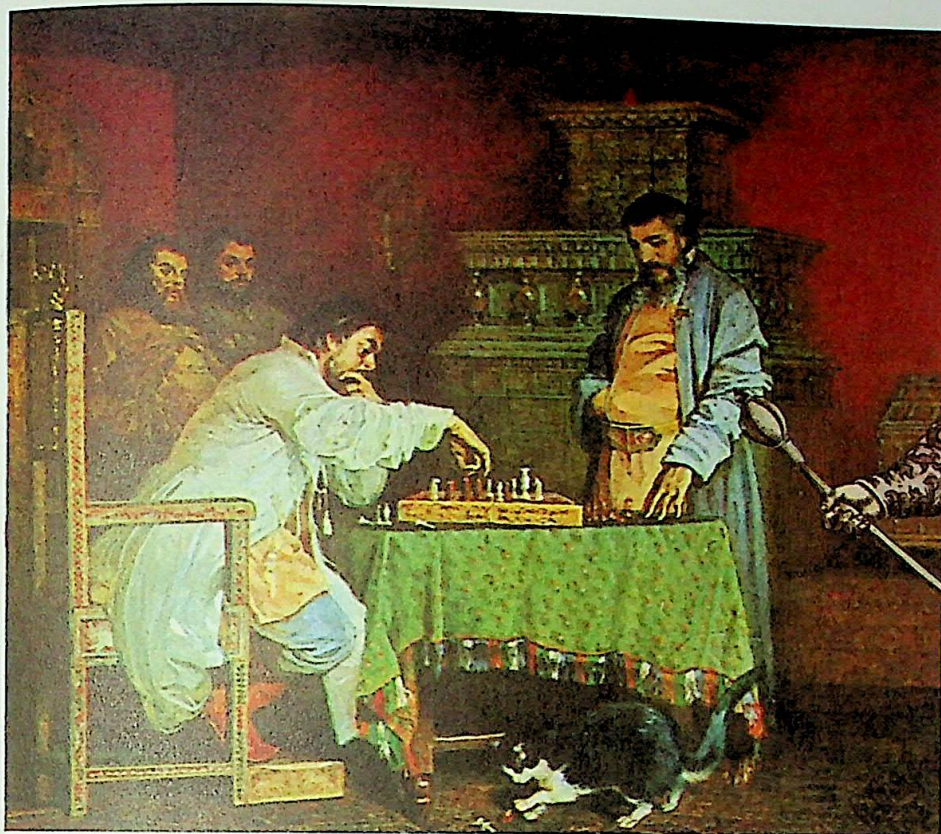


throne of Russia in 1613 marked the end of a period of dramatic upheavals in Russian history. The 'Time of Troubles', as the years 1598 to 1613 are called, had witnessed Polish invasions and occupation of the country, several changes of dynasty, and, above all, a gigantic social ferment in which the peasantry protested violently against the oppressions of the government and their landlords in general and the growing burdens of serfdom in particular. The origins of that revolutionary social movement can be traced back to developments of the fifteenth century and earlier, but, despite its long antecedents and the extent and savagery of the storm in which it culminated, it left few permanent marks on the political and social structure of the country. The fundamental fact of previous Russian political life—the absolutism of the tsars—emerged virtually unscathed from the upheavals. The great majority of the peasants who had played such prominent parts in the movement were returned to the tender mercies of masters whose one real remedy for discontented serfs was continuous and brutal use of the knout.

The Orthodox Church, endowed with enormous estates and vast privileges in 1598, retained both throughout the years of turmoil. It is true that the storms of 1598 to 1613 completed the downfall of the great influence previously enjoyed by the ancient Russian princely and noble families, but this was merely the culmination of a trend which had been continuing throughout the sixteenth century, and the fact that the nobility of birth was replaced by a 'service' nobility, which owed its rise to the influence which it derived from court and state offices, meant that the change was essentially one of personnel—there was certainly no remodelling of the social structure.

Michael, the first Romanov tsar, the man who had the task of maintaining internal peace and stability after the Troubles, was not well equipped for his task. A sickly youth of sixteen when he came to the throne, he was dominated first of all by his forceful mother, and then, from 1619 onwards, by his father Filaret, who had previously been a prisoner in Poland. Filaret became patriarch or head of the Russian Church, was recognised as co-ruler with his son, and, in practice, governed the country until his death in 1633. Michael himself died in 1645 and was succeeded by his only son Alexis, then sixteen years old. The new tsar, a man of conservative mind, pious to the point of bigotry, showed few signs of real ability in matters of state—his main preoccupations seem to have been with complicated church and court ceremonies—and the conduct of government business was left to favourites and officials. When he died in 1676 his eldest son, Fedor, a delicate, unassertive boy of fourteen, succeeded to the throne. Fedor's early death in 1682 precipitated a struggle for power between rival branches of the im-





perial family, a struggle which was the prelude to the reign of Peter the Great.

Reforming the government

The conservatism of Michael, Alexis and Fedor, the three tsars we have been considering, helps to explain the continuity between Russian political and social developments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Before the upheavals of the Time of Troubles the tendency had been towards increasing centralisation and regimentation, a tendency which was resumed under the Romanovs. The central administration of the country was carried on through *prikazy*, government departments inherited from the sixteenth century. There were a large number of these in Michael's reign, perhaps as many as fifty in all. The authority of the different *prikazy* often overlapped and the whole system was both unwieldly and inefficient. During the seventeenth century improvements were made. Some *prikazy* were merged, while others were grouped together under the control of a single official. These reforms, though their importance must not be overrated, did help to prepare the way for the administrative reforms of Peter the Great.

The tendency towards centralisation was more immediately obvious at local level, where administration in the seventeenth century was carried on by governors appointed by the central authorities, and by

elected officials. The elected local officials, who dated from the reign of Ivan the Terrible (1533-84), might seem at first sight to be exceptions to the rule of growing centralisation. In fact, from the very start, they were government agents rather than representatives of local interests, and this aspect of their role developed in the seventeenth century.

The main duty of such officials was the unpopular one of collecting taxes from their fellow citizens, a task for which they received no pay from the government. Their good behaviour was guaranteed by heavy penalties for misdemeanours and by the fact that the local communities which elected them were collectively responsible for their actions. In these circumstances, 'local self-government' was a mockery. Local officials were simply unpaid agents of the central government. They functioned under the close supervision of the governors who were, for all practical purposes, the supreme masters of the territories under their control. Most governors exploited their position to the full, and a complaint of 1642 declared that they had 'reduced the people of all stations to beggary and . . . stripped them to the bone.'

Like the administrative history of seventeenth century Russia the social history can be viewed as essentially a continuation of sixteenth century trends. The great themes of sixteenth century social history were the development of serfdom and the increasing



On the far left: Peter Potemkin, Russian ambassador to the Spain of Charles II. (Prado Museum, Madrid.)

Above left: chess players. (Russian Museum, Leningrad.)

Above: a Russian nobleman in traditional Muscovite costume. Peter the Great brought about a dramatic change in the dress of the nobility when he ordered them to wear western European clothes. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

regimentation of the population as a whole in the interests of the state. Serfdom originated in Russia long before 1500, but it developed rapidly in the sixteenth century. There were two main reasons for this. First of all, there was the policy of the central government which tried, for fiscal purposes, to keep peasants living on state land from moving away. Secondly, there was the growing indebtedness to their masters of peasants living on private estates. In these circumstances, more and more peasants became tied to the land.

Reduced to serfdom

The great Code of Laws issued in 1649 confirmed the developments of the previous century and a half and still further restricted the rights of the peasants—by the Code virtually the whole of the Russian peasantry was reduced to serfdom. Indeed, the framers of the Code embodied in it the idea of the complete subordination of all classes in the

community to the interests of the state, as they saw them. This applied just as much to the two other great classes, the burghers and the nobles, as it did to the peasants. Burghers were forbidden to move from the towns where they were living when the Code was issued—a provision largely designed to prevent tax evasion—and the nobility, who were given the sole right to own estates farmed by servile labour, became a hereditary caste whose main duty was military service to the state.

The provisions of the Code were, of course, honoured as much in the breach as in the observance. Despite its failures, however, the main idea which it enshrined—the idea of the total subordination of the needs of the individual to the good of the state—was to dominate almost the whole of later Russian history.

Alexis and Fedor, despite their conservatism, did, in one respect at least, show themselves to be less hidebound than many of their subjects. They accepted changes in





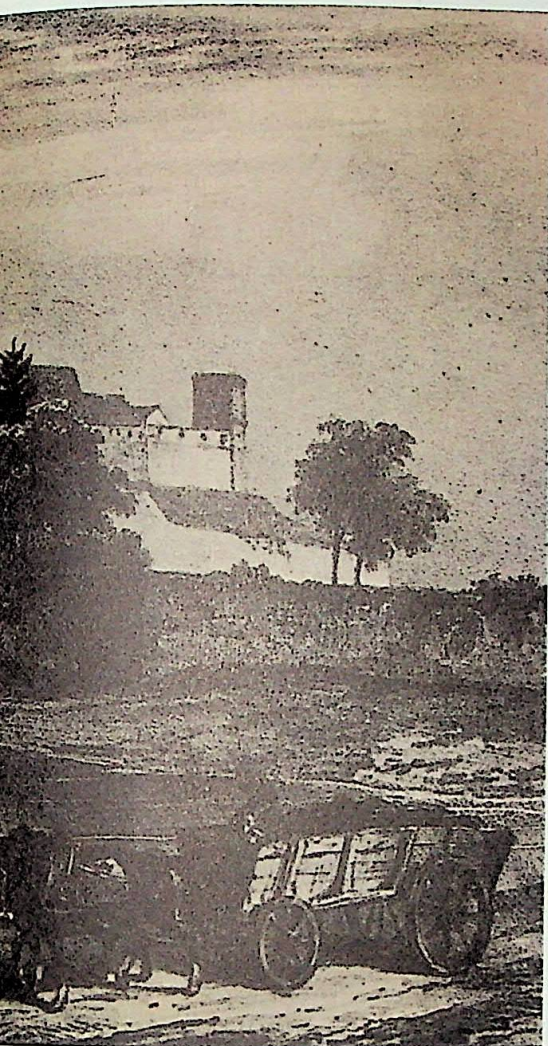
In the seventeenth century Sweden was a great European power, a position which she won under Gustavus Adolphus. On his death in battle in 1632 he was succeeded by his daughter Christina who abdicated in 1654 on her conversion to Catholicism. She spent most of the remainder of her life in Rome. In 1659 she visited Paris. The picture above shows her reception there.
On the left: soldiers carrying Swedish and Danish ensigns.
On the right: a Polish ensign. (All Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

church ritual and in the phrasing of certain religious texts which were anathema to large numbers of Russians and which produced an important and permanent schism in the Russian Church. The matters at issue seem incredibly trivial today, but minor points of ceremonial, such as the use of three instead of two fingers in making the sign of the cross provoked the most ferocious cruelties from the authorities and the staunchest resistance and utmost heroism from the 'Old Believers', as those who resisted the changes came to be called.

The changes, which brought Russia into line with other Orthodox Churches, were approved by a great Church council which met in the autumn of 1666 and continued its work until 1667. This council, which was attended by the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch and representatives of other important branches of the Eastern Church anathematised all who refused to accept the revised texts and the new ritual. The extent of resistance to the decisions of 1667 bears witness to the attachment to traditional religious observances which characterised a large part of the population of Russia. For them, formal piety was the very essence of the faith and they saw in the changes the abandonment of Christianity itself. During the period when the most violent persecutions took place, the years up to about 1690, thousands of Old Believers burned themselves to death to escape contamination by the new 'heresy.'

The schism of the later seventeenth century weakened the inner religious life of the official Church by depriving it of many of its more devout members. It also





By the seventeenth century Poland was in decline. During her 'golden age' in the sixteenth century Cracow was the capital of the country. The picture above shows the royal castle there.

On the left: a wealthy Polish woman at the end of the sixteenth century. (Both in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

weakened its position in relation to the state. In its efforts to suppress the Old Believers it had to rely more and more on the power and goodwill of the tsar. This was the situation which, in the early eighteenth century, enabled Peter the Great to reduce the Church to the position of a department of state.

Russia begins to look west

The changes in the Church can hardly be regarded as 'progressive'—they were an attempt to return to the pure Orthodoxy of the past—but, despite the profoundly conservative ethos of Russian life at all levels, there were areas in which new ideas did break into the country. The so-called 'westernisation' of Russia, itself a misleading term, started long before the reign of Peter the Great, who is traditionally regarded by historians as its most distinguished protagonist. In the sixteenth century Ivan the Terrible imported foreign artisans and craftsmen and a special suburb of Moscow, the 'German' quarter, as it was known, was set aside for their residence. This settlement was abolished during the Time of Troubles but restored in 1652 as a result of the large influx of foreigners during the reign of Michael and the early years of Alexis. The government was afraid that native Russians might be contaminated by the habits and heresies of the foreigners, hence the attempted segregation of 1652, but it was impossible to keep foreign habits from influencing, at least to some extent, the upper classes in Moscow. Even the tsar himself was affected. He introduced foreign furniture into the palace, established an orchestra, instituted theatrical performances and developed a liking for the ballet.

The immigration of foreigners, which made possible the beginnings—at a very superficial level—of western cultural influence in Russia was, however, permitted and encouraged by the government for severely practical reasons. The Russian army was much inferior to those of its neighbours, especially to that of Sweden, both in the quality of its troops and in the weapons at its disposal. Many foreign soldiers of fortune were employed in the seventeenth century in an effort to improve the fighting standards of the army and attempts were made to exploit Russia's natural resources in the service of the armed forces by encouraging the immigration of industrialists and craftsmen who were ordered to train native Russians in their skills. In this way it was hoped that Russia would eventually become independent of foreign technical aid. That, of course, was a very long-term ambition: the country was not only sadly lacking in skilled manpower of every kind but also in the educational institutions which were the necessary prerequisite for technical advances.

The anxiety of seventeenth century tsars

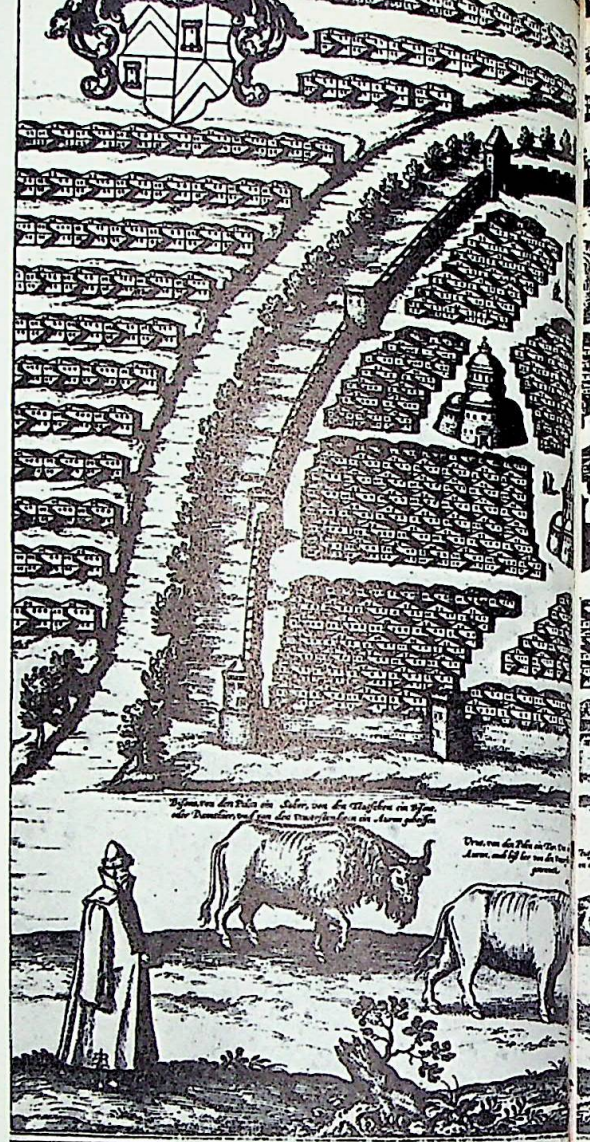
to improve their armed forces reflected the fact that a very large part of their reigns was spent at war, almost half the total period between 1613 and 1682. These wars were fought against Sweden, Poland, the Tartars and the Turks, often on several fronts at the same time. The seventeenth century was the great age of Swedish power. That power was based on the genius of a series of warrior kings, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles X, Charles XII, on the efficiency and patriotism of her armies, on the exploitation of her natural resources of tin and copper, and, above all, on the relative weakness of her neighbours, especially Poland and Russia. These temporary advantages were nullified by the growth of Russian power under Peter the Great and when Sweden suffered a series of setbacks in the early eighteenth century she did not have reserves of population and natural resources (her copper industry was by that time in decline) to fall back on. In the seventeenth century, however, she was much too strong for the Russia of the day and kept her away from the shores of the Baltic, a traditional area for Russian expansionist ambitions.

A divided Poland offers little resistance

Seventeenth century Russia, which thus faced Sweden at the height of her power, fought a Polish state which was in decline.

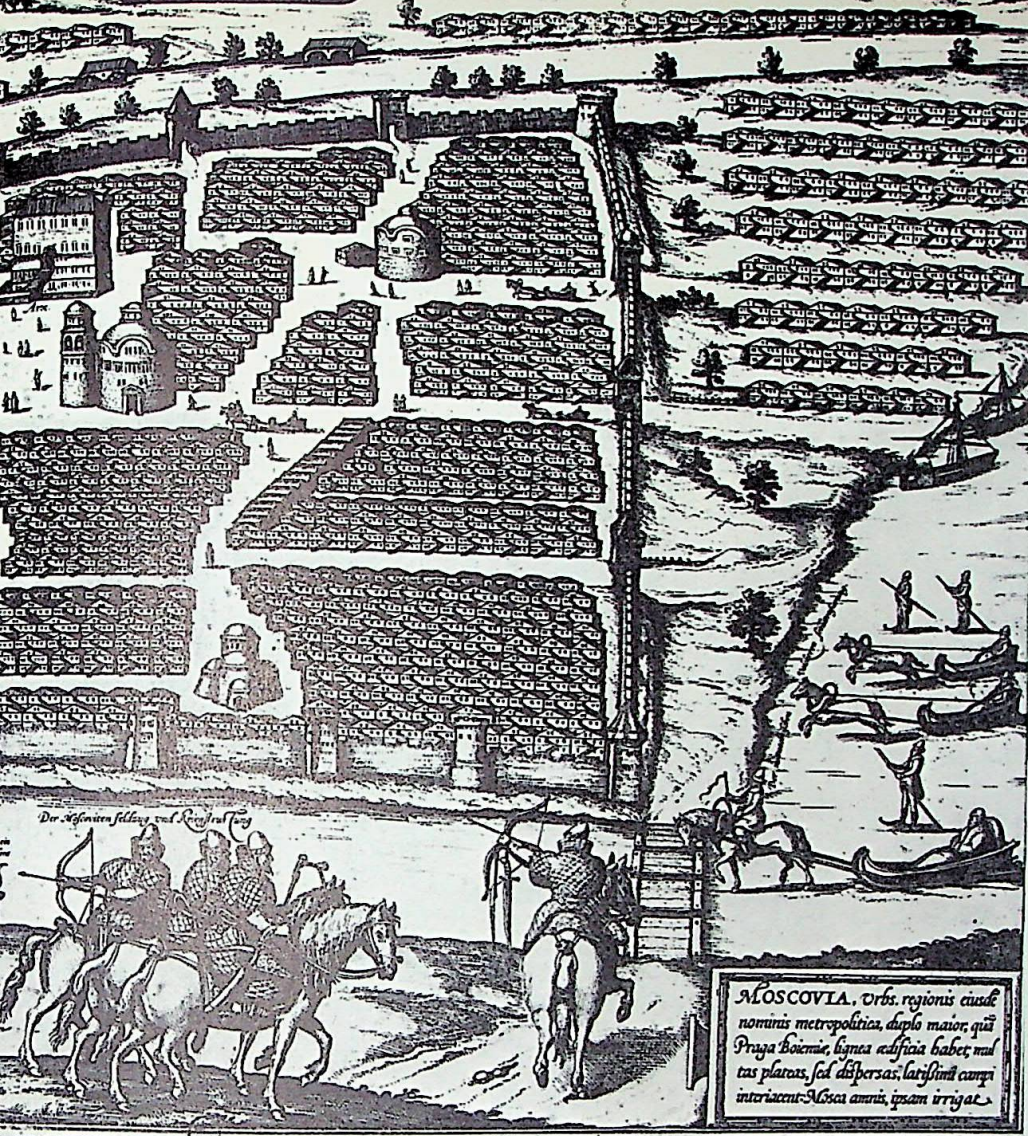
The sixteenth century had been Poland's golden age. Then she was the predominant political power in east central Europe. In 1572, however, the great Jagellonian dynasty which had ruled the country since the fourteenth century died out and a process of progressive political disintegration began under a series of elected kings who were forced to concede more and more power to the land-owning gentry or *szlachta* who, by the middle of the seventeenth century, had gained a dominant voice in the country. That dominance received institutional form in 1652 with the introduction of the notorious *liberum veto*. By applying the veto any member of the Diet (the Polish parliament)—a body dominated by the *szlachta*—could not only defeat the legislation under consideration but also nullify all laws previously agreed in that session of the Diet and dissolve the Diet itself.

In the hands of the selfish *szlachta* the *liberum veto*—which was merely the most striking provision of a constitution which by the mid seventeenth century deprived the Polish king of all real power—was an instrument of anarchy. Against a Poland faced with such formidable internal political weaknesses, Russia had some military successes. Between 1654 and 1689 a complicated and bloody struggle took place between the two countries for control of the Ukraine. Russia emerged with substantial territorial gains, including the city of Kiev, but she had expended immense sums of men



Above: Peter the Great. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)
 During his visit to Holland in 1697 he insisted on staying in a peasant house (far right, below) at Zaandam. (History and Reconstruction Museum, Moscow.)
 Above right: a view of Moscow in the seventeenth century. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)
 Below right: the regent Sophie, half-sister of Peter the Great. (Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.)



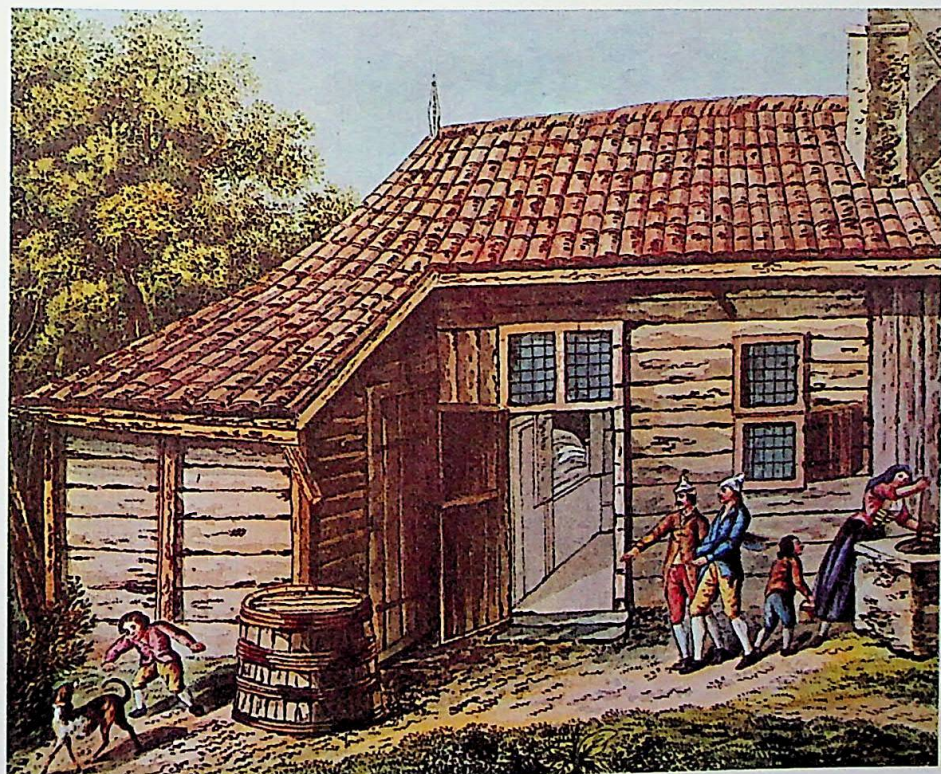


and money in the process and her victories did not render the southern frontier more secure. That still remained at the mercy of the nomadic Tartars, backed by the power of the Ottoman Empire.

The history of Russia in the seventeenth century, then, is a story of conservatism in both Church and state. The tsars and their advisers were suspicious of all outside influences which might contaminate the true Russian heritage. They were, it is true, prepared to accept changes in the Church which were anathema to large sections of the population, but these changes were merely a return to the stream of genuine Orthodox tradition from which Russia had departed through ignorance. The 'westernisation' of the country—if the term must be used—was an attempt to introduce western technical and military expertise into Russia under strictly regulated conditions, an attempt to increase the power of the state, not to change the social milieu. The population as a whole was subjected to a regimentation which was never entirely effective but which aimed, as the Code of 1649 showed very clearly, at the complete subjection of the individual to the needs of the state.

In this situation general standards of personal behaviour were almost incredibly low. Tsar Alexis won the reputation of being a kindly man, but even he used his fists freely on the highest state dignitaries, and frequent and often sadistically violent beatings with the knout were not only commonplace but were the lot of high and low, young and old, women as well as men. Drunkenness was common, and incest and sexual perversion were rife, especially among the lower classes, where big families were often crowded into a single room. Contemporary observers, both Russian and foreign, are unanimous about the brutality and general coarseness of conduct which were the rule rather than the exception in Russia. The country which Peter the Great was called upon to rule must have been a hell for those with sensitive natures, if any such were able to survive until maturity in the conditions just described.

Peter's formal accession to the throne came in 1682, on the death of Fedor. Fedor was survived by a brother Ivan, a half-blind, mentally defective youth of fifteen, and six sisters—all children of Alexis by his first wife Maria Miloslavsky, and by a half brother, Peter, Alexis's son by a second wife, Nathalie Naryshkin. This situation was the signal for a series of intrigues between the rival Naryshkin and Miloslavsky clans. At first the robust, ten-year-old Peter was proclaimed tsar, but the Miloslavsky fought back under the leadership of Sophie, one of Alexis's daughters, a very ambitious woman of twenty-five. She conducted a skilful propaganda campaign, directed against the Naryshkin, among the *streltsy*, a semi-military organisation which was stationed in the capital and whose members engaged in trading activities in addition to their





military duties. By promising them increased pay and privileges she won their support, and on three successive days in May 1682 the streltsy invaded the Kremlin and put some of Peter's Naryshkin relatives to death in full view of the young tsar.

As a result of this *coup d'état* Ivan and Peter were proclaimed joint tsars. Power, however, passed to Sophie, who became regent. The events of May 1682 must have been a traumatic experience for Peter. Some historians have used the bloody events of these days to explain the cruelties and contradictions of his later career. One thing at least seems certain. When Peter had to deal with a streltsy revolt in 1698, when he was in full control of the government, memories of the events of 1682 must have stirred in his mind. It is worth noting that the rebels of 1698 were treated with a cruelty which even Ivan the Terrible had never exceeded.

The tsar builds his own ships

Sophie's rule lasted for seven years and was brought to an end largely by her own ambitions. She seems to have planned to get rid of her brothers and proclaim herself sole ruler. The streltsy refused to support her and she was deprived of power and locked up in a convent. After her downfall Ivan and Peter ruled jointly, although the former took no part in the actual business of government. He died in 1696.

When he became sole tsar Peter's character was already fully formed. During Sophie's regency he had lived in a small village on the outskirts of Moscow. There he formed a miniature army and developed an interest in ships, an interest inspired by his discovery of an old English sailing boat in a barn. This enthusiasm for maritime matters was confirmed by visits to Archangel in 1693 and 1694. It was on the first visit that he first actually saw the sea. In the years immediately

after Sophie's fall he seems to have taken little interest in affairs of state. He preferred to organise large scale army manoeuvres and build boats. When he did visit the capital, he rarely went to the Kremlin, but spent most of his time in the company of friends in the German settlement. There, at the centre of a group of foreign and Russian companions headed by the Scotsman, Patrick Gordon, the Swiss, Francis Lefort, and the Russian, Alexander Menshikov, Peter was exposed to the influence of Western ideas as well as to the pleasures of drinking and venery. By 1695, in fact, when he undertook his first campaign against Azov, a Turkish port on the Black Sea, Peter had already shown great interest in the three influences which were subsequently to dominate his reign: the army, the sea, and western Europe.

The 1695 campaign was a failure, but Peter returned to the fray the following year, when, with the aid of a hastily con-



structed fleet, he captured Azov. In 1697 he decided to visit western Europe in person, to find out what it was really like and to study navigation, shipbuilding and the military arts in general. The tsar travelled incognito throughout his trip, which included visits to Brandenburg, the United Provinces, England and Austria. The incognito, however, was loosely observed—it would have been difficult to maintain in any event in view of Peter's remarkable appearance; he was a giant of a man over six and a half feet tall. He returned to Moscow via Vienna, which he left earlier than expected in order to deal with a streltsy rebellion which had broken out in his capital. His bloody repression of the revolt was followed by the disbandment of the streltsy regiments stationed in the capital. The political power of what had been Russia's praetorian guard was thus broken once and for all.

As a result of his first visit to the west

Peter brought to Moscow hundreds of western technicians and artisans. The journey had stimulated his curiosity about other countries and later in his reign he made further visits abroad, including a notable trip to France in 1717.

Peter's reign was dominated by wars. During the entire period of his rule, from the downfall of Sophie until his death, only one whole year, 1724, was free from military activities. The needs of these very expensive wars determined not only his foreign policy but the domestic history of the reign as well. The great majority of his reforms were introduced with a view to making the country able to fight more effectively.

Peter's army defeats the Swedes

The military operations of the reign included campaigns against Turkey in 1695, 1696 and 1710–11, and a war against

Far left: Charles XII, the warrior-king of Sweden, (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris) who was defeated in 1709 by Peter the Great (centre) (Hermitage Museum, Leningrad) at the battle of Poltava (above) (History and Reconstruction Museum, Moscow). This marked the replacement of Sweden by Russia as the greatest power in eastern Europe.

Persia in 1722-3. As a result of the campaigns against the Turks Peter gained and then lost the port of Azov on the Black Sea. In the Persian war he obtained territory on the western and southern shores of the Caspian Sea, lands which Russia lost soon after his death. These wars, however, were overshadowed by the great struggle against Sweden, which occupied the years from 1700 to 1721. Peter fought to gain territory on the Baltic which would give him an outlet to western Europe. In the struggle Russia was only one member—though certainly the most important member—of a coalition which included, at different times, Denmark, Poland, Brandenburg and Hanover. Each of these countries had its own ambitions and grudges against Sweden, which was still in 1700 the dominant Baltic power and a great European power as well.

We cannot discuss in detail the complicated course of the war. Russia at first did very badly. She suffered an overwhelming defeat in 1700 at Narva, a Swedish fortress on the Gulf of Finland. In that battle a small army of Swedes under their young warrior-king Charles XII, a man of reckless courage and some military genius, defeated a Russian force perhaps five times as large. As a result of the defeat Peter, for a time, contemplated peace at any price. Soon, however, he recovered his nerve and set about reorganising his army and building a fleet. His efforts were repaid in full measure in 1709 when, at Poltava in the Ukraine, the reformed Russian army, under Peter's personal command, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Swedes. It was the turning point in the war. Charles XII took refuge in Turkey after his defeat. He later returned to Sweden but was never able to recover for his country her former dominant position. After his death in battle in 1718 peace became inevitable. The Treaty of Nystadt of 1721 recognised the changed power structure in the north. Russia gained from Sweden the Baltic provinces of Livonia, Esthonia and Ingria and a part of Karelia. Peter had obtained his window to the west, but it was at a heavy cost to the Russian people.

The Northern War was the great motivating force behind most of Peter's domestic reforms. He reorganised the army and created a navy in order to defeat Sweden: his financial measures were designed principally to secure enough money to pay for the vastly expanded military establishment; his administrative measures were intended to make the country's war machine more effective by strengthening the civilian government behind it; his encouragement of industrial development was chiefly designed to produce arms, equipment and clothes for his soldiers and sailors.

Peter began the war against Sweden with an army 35-40,000 strong, consisting mainly of inadequately trained volunteers. By the end of the reign it had developed into a



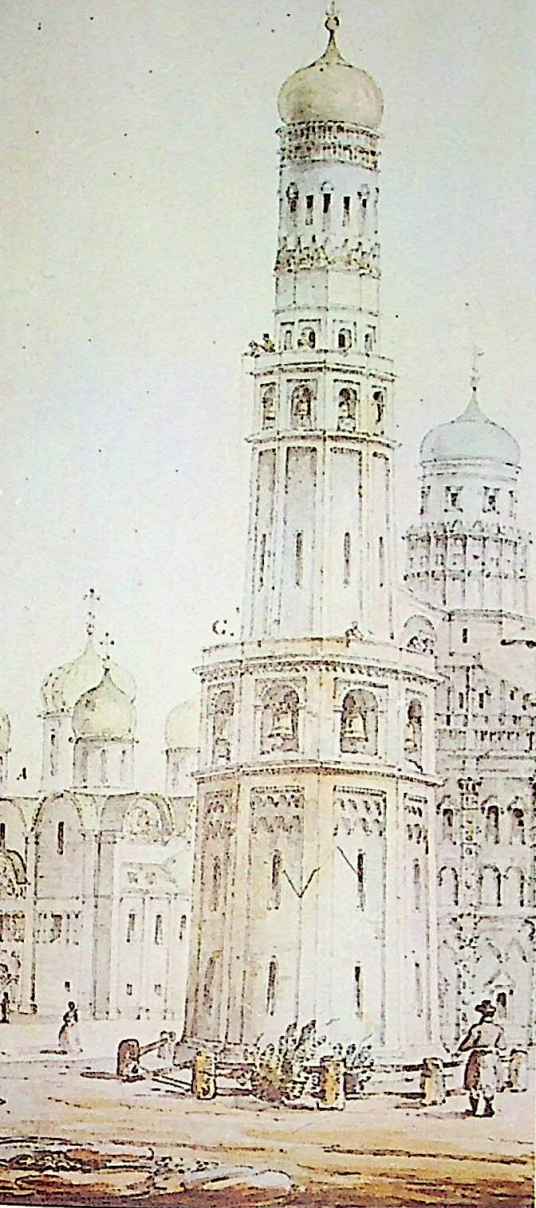
comparatively well organised regular force of some 200,000 men. In 1703, when the conquest of Ingria gave him access to the Baltic, he began the construction of a fleet there. When he died in 1725 he had about 800 vessels of all types manned by nearly 30,000 seamen.

A tax on baths and beards

Peter was always desperately short of money to pay for his ever-expanding army and navy. War expenditure rose from about 2,300,000 roubles in 1701 to 3,200,000 in 1710, and even in 1724, a year of peace, the maintenance of the army and navy cost the state well over 5,000,000 roubles. The additional revenue required to meet these growing military needs was raised by debasing the coinage, and by hand to mouth methods such as the invention of ingenious new taxes, like those imposed on hats, beehives, smokestacks, private bath-houses, and beards. State trading monopolies—on salt and tobacco, for example—were established, and, towards the end of the reign, a

poll-tax. The poll-tax, levied on individuals, replaced a tax on households as the basis of the system of direct taxation. This reform in particular brought considerable additional revenue to the government—revenue from direct taxation rose from 1,800,000 to 4,600,000 roubles after its introduction. The burden of these additional taxes fell, of course, on the peasants, who also provided the great bulk of recruits for the armed forces. Peter's quest for military glory certainly brought no obvious gains to the rank and file of his subjects, only added burdens.

The tsar's administrative reforms, some of them directly inspired by military problems, were all at least indirectly related to the needs of war: greater efficiency in civil government would help to produce a more effective military machine. The reforms introduced were of the greatest importance in Russian institutional history. The provinces, into which the country was divided by a decree of 1707, lasted, with modifications, until the fall of the Empire, as did the Senate, which was established in 1711. This



On the left: Moscow, which was replaced as the capital of Russia in the early eighteenth century by Peter the Great's new creation, St Petersburg. (Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.)

On the right: the tsarina Maria, first wife of Tsar Alexis. (History and Reconstruction Museum, Moscow.)



became the chief organ of administrative control in Russia and the highest judicial authority as well. The central administration itself was reorganised in 1717 by the creation of nine colleges, based on Swedish models, to replace the old prikazy. Some of these colleges lasted until the nineteenth century. The confusion almost inevitably created by the introduction of so many major reforms in a few years, together with the lack of properly trained staff for the new institutions, meant that the measures had less success than Peter hoped in producing administrative efficiency. Their long subsequent life, however, bears witness to their importance. Peter the Great was a major administrative reformer.

The development of Russian industry under Peter was largely a result of the great and growing need of the army and navy for arms and equipment. By the end of the reign there were about 200 large-scale industrial enterprises in operation. Among the most important of these were armaments works and foundries—notably the iron industry of the Urals—and textile

mills, which produced cloth for army uniforms.

Cannon fodder for the tsar's wars

The chief duty of the nobility in seventeenth-century Russia had been military service. This remained its principal function in Peter's reign, though he imposed the obligation with a vigour which had previously been lacking. He also began a large scale recruitment of the nobility into the newly created organs of civil administration. Noblemen may have been angered by the growing duties imposed upon them by the state, but they had compensations. In Peter's reign they were allowed to maintain and even to increase their already firm hold over their serfs. The serfs, in contrast, had nothing to brighten the gloom of their lives. They had not only to contend with the cruelties of their masters, but were faced with ever increasing demands from the state: demands for their bodies, to be used as cannon-fodder in Peter's wars, and

demands for more and more of their meagre earnings in taxation. It is no wonder that frequent peasant revolts, especially in southern Russia, were a feature of the reign.

Peter, therefore, treated his subjects, nobles and peasants alike, not as individuals, but as assets at the service of the state, assets to be employed in any way he thought fit. The Church, too, was firmly subordinated to his control. The Russian Church had traditionally been subservient to the tsars, and the schism of 1667 had, as we have seen, increased its dependence on the state. Until Peter's reign, however, it had at least had its own head, the Patriarch, who enjoyed vast dignity and prestige. After the death of Adrian in 1700, however, Peter left the patriarchate vacant. In 1721 the office was abolished altogether and the government of the Church handed over to a holy synod, which was headed by a layman appointed by the tsar. With this reform the Church became, much more clearly than ever before, a department of state, a position which it was to retain until the Revolution.



Above: the Tsarevich Peter, son of Peter the Great and his second wife, Catherine. He died in 1719. (Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.)

A new capital

In addition to his major reforms Peter introduced many minor changes which had a significant cumulative effect on the appearance and behaviour of the upper classes in society. Members of the nobility were ordered to wear western dress and to shave off their beards, and women of the upper classes were encouraged, even ordered, to attend social gatherings—a fundamental breach of the traditional seclusion in which they had been kept until then. These reforms meant that the upper classes had been westernised in dress and appearance by the end of the reign. The peasantry remained largely unaffected. Peter's reign marked, in fact, the beginnings of a decisive split in Russian society between the nobility and the rest of the population. This tendency was accentuated by and indeed was partly a result of the foundation of St Petersburg in 1703 on the shores of the Gulf of Finland. The new capital, which became the mecca of the Russian nobility, was, by its very geographical position, exposed to the influence of western Europe as Moscow had never been.

Peter's creation of a new capital was one completely original and very important contribution which he made to Russian history. There were other original policies,

such as the establishment of the holy synod and the creation of a navy, but much of his work was a development, at an accelerated pace, of trends already established by his predecessors. This was certainly true of his policy of 'westernisation'.

Peter died in January 1725, at the age of fifty two, of complications caused by chronic venereal disease. He remains an enigmatic figure. He combined enormous energy and great intellectual curiosity with a propensity for extreme cruelty which can only be explained, not excused, by the general brutality of the age and country in which he lived. There is no doubt about his importance in Russian and, indeed, in world history. In the mid 1690s, when he assumed personal control of the government, Russia was at best a second, at worst a third rate power. At his death in 1725 she was, as a result of his efforts, unquestionably the dominant state in northern and eastern Europe and a power of first rate importance in the continent as a whole. She has retained both these positions ever since.



Rebellions and revolutions

Six rebellions in mid-century Europe; the reasons for revolt—political pressures, economic crisis or social upheaval? mathematics—the key to the revolutions in science and thought; Galileo and Newton explore the heavens; the scientific spirit influences medicine and political philosophy; Descartes builds a universe founded on reason; changes in the art of war herald the decline of Spanish supremacy; Europe builds mighty armies.

In the 1640s and 1650s there was a great series of rebellions and revolutions in Europe. In May 1640 the people of Catalonia in the north-east of the Iberian peninsula, rose in revolt against the Madrid government of Philip IV and his minister, the Count-Duke of Olivares. In January 1641 the rebels elected Louis XIII of France as count of Catalonia in place of Philip IV, and the struggle continued until 1652 when the Spanish government recaptured the town of Barcelona and brought the revolt to an end. Portugal also rebelled in 1640 against the domination of Madrid, and the duke of Braganza, a scion of the old national royal house of Avis, was proclaimed king, a decision which was ratified by the Cortes, the Portuguese parliament, in January 1641.

The war between Spain and Portugal which followed lasted intermittently until 1668, when Portuguese independence was formally recognised. The third great rebellion against Spain did not come until seven years after the outbreak of the Catalanian and Portuguese revolts. In July 1647 a young Neapolitan fisherman, Masaniello, led a movement against the oppressive government of the duke of Arcos, the hated Spanish viceroy of Naples. The revolt, however, was short lived. It lasted only until March 1648, when Spanish authority was restored.

Besides the three rebellions against Madrid there were revolutionary movements in England, France and the United Provinces. By far the most important of

these, of course, was the conflict in England. This can be said to have begun in 1640 with the calling of the Long Parliament by Charles I, who was desperate for financial assistance against his rebellious Scottish subjects. The subsequent civil wars of 1642–8 led to the eleven years interregnum which preceded the restoration of Charles II in 1660.

Less prolonged and of less permanent significance was the movement known as the Fronde, which took place in France between 1648 and 1653. This had its immediate origins in general discontent at the

Above: the Louvre and the Seine in the seventeenth century. (Musée Carnavalet, Paris.)



There were vast gulfs between the classes in seventeenth-century Europe.
 Left: a seventeenth-century French nobleman (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris) and (above) a peasant family by Le Nain. Most peasants faced the possibility of starvation in the event of a bad harvest (Musée du Louvre, Paris).
 On the right: the Louvre and the Seine. (Musée Carnavalet, Paris.)



financial exactions of Cardinal Mazarin's government and in its early stages it was headed by the Parlement of Paris, which imposed a comprehensive reform programme on the Crown. Later, however, the leadership was taken over by members of the nobility, who showed only too plainly that they were motivated by selfish ambitions. As a result, Mazarin, who twice went into exile during the struggle, was able to return permanently in 1653. The reform programme which the government had accepted under pressure in 1648 was quietly forgotten.

The sixth upheaval, in the United Provinces, led to the establishment there of the republican régime of 1650-72. In 1648-9, after the end of the Thirty Years' War, the States of Holland demanded substantial reductions in the army. William II, stadtholder of most of the provinces of the union and captain-general of its military forces, went some way to meet those demands but refused to go as far as the States of Holland wished. William and his opponents in Holland became more and more estranged as the months passed and civil war seemed a real possibility, especially as both parties took measures which overstepped the bounds of strict constitutional legality. In August 1650 William made preparations for a military *coup d'état* directed against Amsterdam, the centre of the opposition, but the city immediately made concessions. The general outcome of the struggle was, however, still uncertain in October when William caught smallpox. The following month he died. In the reaction which followed, the forces of centralisation in the republic were left leaderless and the republican era, under the dominance of Holland, began.

Heavy taxes lead to revolt

Despite very great differences in the duration and importance of these six revolutions they had, in their origins, some common features. All were, to a considerable extent, reactions against the financial demands of governments which were engaged in expensive wars. Spain, France and the United Provinces all took part in the Thirty Years' War. Spain fought against the Dutch between 1621 and 1648 and in 1635 found herself at war with France as well, a struggle which continued until 1659. The enormous cost of military operations led Olivares in Spain and Richelieu and later Mazarin in France to multiply the financial demands which they made upon their peoples. In Olivares' case, he was particularly determined that the non-Castilian parts of the Spanish Empire should pay a fair share of the cost of the war. He therefore made substantial financial demands upon Catalonia, Portugal and Naples, demands which led directly to rebellions.

Similarly in France, Mazarin's desperate



need for money to carry on the war against Spain led to a series of financial expedients which, in turn, sparked off the Fronde. In the United Provinces it was a combination of William II's determination to renew the war with Spain after the peace of 1648 and Holland's equally firm resolution to disband as many as possible of his expensive troops which produced the revolutionary situation of 1650. In England it was Charles I's need for money for an army to send against his rebellious Scottish subjects which compelled him to summon the Long Parliament.

The rebellions and revolutions of the 1640s and 1650s were, however, more than just political and constitutional conflicts brought on by war and fought out between governments on the one hand and the people and representative institutions of their countries on the other. This kind of interpretation, which, in a sophisticated form, satisfied many past historians, is now seen to be too simple. It tells us part of the truth about the conflicts of the mid-seventeenth century, but, if we want to discover the whole truth, we must dig deeper.

One explanation which has been widely publicised and widely accepted in recent years is the Marxist interpretation. According to Marxists and to some other economic historians who accept their arguments, the 'general crisis' of the mid-seventeenth century, which produced so many revolts and revolutions, was basically an economic crisis. The conservative forces in the rebellions, they believe, represented 'feudal' interests, whereas the revolutionaries, in some of the revolts at least, represented the 'progressive' ambitions of the bourgeoisie, hampered in their economic activities by the dominance of restrictive and obsolete governmental systems. It was only in England, however—so the argument goes on—that the 'progressive' forces, representatives of nascent capitalism, were able to triumph completely. Thus, in England alone the old structure of government was shattered and, within the new freer forms which were established, rapid industrial advances were later possible. Such an interpretation, which sees the English Revolution of 1640-60 as a necessary precursor of the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century, is, on the face of it, a plausible hypothesis. It gives a clear, general explanation of the mid-century revolts and specific reasons for the widely held assumptions that the conflict in England was much the most important of all the struggles.

There is also, however, a grave weakness in the thesis. Little solid evidence can be advanced to support it. It is difficult, if not impossible, to demonstrate convincingly that the economic ambitions of the bourgeoisie were a significant motive force behind the revolutions of the 1640s and 1650s, and the supposition that the Puritan triumphs of 1640-60 in England directly aided the growth of capitalism there is only

a theory. It has not been positively proved. The Marxist account is, therefore, an interesting hypothesis, but it can at best only add to our understanding of the mid-century crisis, not provide a total explanation of it.

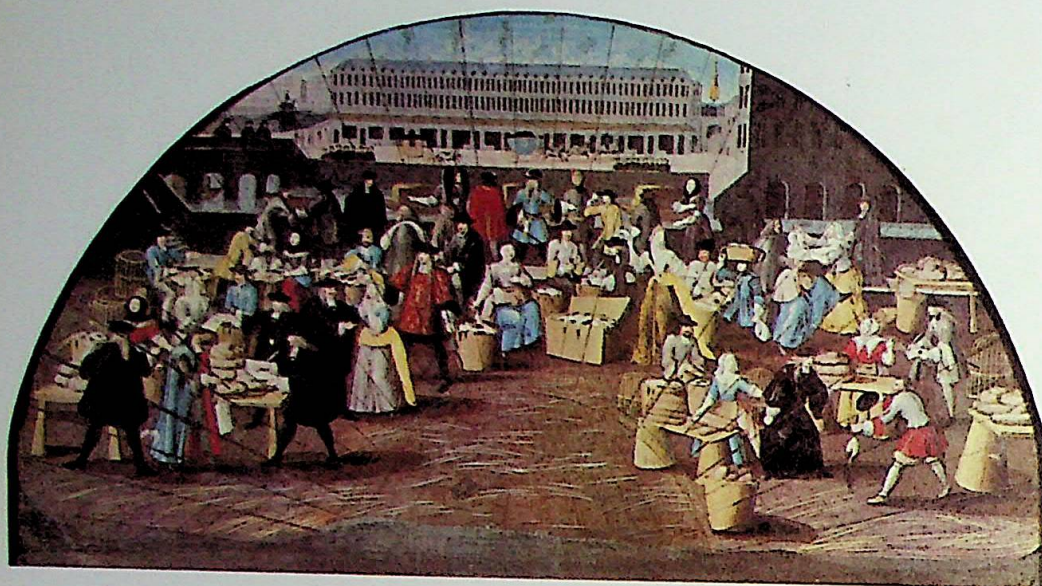
Another ambitious interpretation less narrowly based than that of the Marxists is the recent thesis of Professor H. R. Trevor-Roper, who argues that the mid-century revolutions were the culmination of a general social crisis which had been developing in western Europe since about 1500. The whole period from around the beginning of the sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century should, he argues, be regarded as the age of 'Renaissance' society and the 'Renaissance' state. During these years, he maintains, the societies of most European states were dominated by the increasingly magnificent and expensive courts of their kings and princes and by ever expanding bureaucratic machines staffed by greedy officials. Only a small fraction of the cost of these great bureaucracies fell upon the princes whom they served. Much the larger share, probably well over three-quarters of the cost, fell upon the population at large. This was because the salaries and fees which officials were paid by their governments for prescribed administrative duties tended to be small and remain fixed. On the other hand, officials could expect tips or gratuities from clients who hoped, by such gifts, to oil the wheels of the administrative machine to their own advantage. Gratuities were generally accepted as a necessary evil, but the line between the legitimate profits of office and open corruption was hard to draw. It seems plausible that, as the sixteenth century wore on and the seventeenth century opened, standards throughout Europe declined. They certainly did so in England, where the situation under King James I, when any adventurer might hope to make a quick profit, at the expense of the subject, was a far cry from the position in the middle of the Elizabethan period when the queen and her chief minister, Lord Burghley, husbanded the resources of Crown patronage in the general interests of the nation.

This expansion of courts and bureaucracies and the corruption which accompanied it was only possible, Trevor-Roper maintains, because the general expansion of the European economy in the sixteenth century made the expense bearable to the population as a whole. Even so, by the 1590s the costs of Philip II's wars produced everywhere in Europe a growing volume of complaint, and popular anger was very often directed against bureaucratic extravagances. If peace had not come in the first decade of the seventeenth century, the whole system might soon have cracked under the strain.



Above: an important official of the Parlement of Paris. On the right: a wealthy middle-class Frenchwoman of the time of Henry IV and a doctor of medicine. (All Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.) The middle-class officials who served Louis XIV in central and local government were hated by the great nobles of the court. This can be seen very clearly in the Memoirs of the duke of Saint-Simon.





*Above: a bread and chicken market in Paris about 1600.
On the right: skaters on the Seine in the seventeenth century. (Both Musée Carnavalet, Paris.)*



Court and country at loggerheads

In these circumstances, when war was resumed in the 1620s, governments with larger and larger military expenditure to meet, had to make continually increasing financial demands upon subjects who had to find the money, amidst the dislocations of war, out of the proceeds of contracting economies. The inflated Renaissance courts and bureaucracies then became intolerable financial burdens. The 1620s thus saw the creation of a revolutionary situation in which the main ingredient in many European states was the anger of the 'country'—those subjects who had no profitable contacts with the ruling courts and bureaucracies—against the demands and extravagances of their masters. The rebellions of the 1640s, Trevor-Roper believes, were fundamentally a result of this general resentment, though of course each revolt was sparked off by specific immediate grievances in its country of origin.

The Trevor-Roper thesis, brilliantly argued and presented, is open to detailed

criticisms from specialists in the history of each of the individual countries concerned, but it surely adds to and deepens our knowledge of the mid-century rebellions. Tensions between 'court' and 'country' were certainly a very important factor in the history of early seventeenth century Europe and though Trevor-Roper may be wrong in seeing them as the most important cause of the revolts of the 1640s, his explanation of these conflicts as great social crises is a valuable and convincing complement to the more traditional stress on military and constitutional factors and to the fashionable theses of the Marxists.

The middle decades of the seventeenth century, the time of the rebellions, divide two different worlds, the worlds of the early and later seventeenth century. The reasons for the transformation of European life which took place at that time are many and complex. The political, constitutional, economic and social revolutions of the 1640s and 1650s—for the events of mid-century were all these combined—played a part in this transformation, but even more important, perhaps, were profound general

changes in European thought. Basically, the world of 1700 was completely different from the world of 1600 because the seventeenth century saw a combined scientific and general intellectual revolution which had unparalleled consequences for human attitudes and, ultimately, for the physical life of man on earth.

Scientific and intellectual revolution

In the long run the scientific and intellectual changes of the seventeenth century were vital in producing our twentieth century civilisation with its generally accepted emphasis on rational calculations. We must remember, however, that, in the short term, these developments produced a society where, perhaps to a greater extent than ever before, there was a profound gulf between the ideas and attitudes of the educated classes and of the ignorant multitudes. In previous centuries, although the gulf between educated men and the population in general was very wide, they shared to a considerable extent the same general assumption



tions about man and the universe. In the course of the seventeenth century this ceased to be true.

Between 1600 and 1700 the literate reading public of Europe fed itself on the flood of books in which those who were exploring the frontiers of knowledge propagated and sometimes even attempted to popularise their ideas. Of course, even the great majority of the educated men who read the books of the leading scientists and thinkers of the time did not fully grasp their arguments—how many men in the seventeenth century really understood the works of Newton?—but they absorbed enough to produce a radical change in their ways of thought. The profound difference between the educated and uneducated communities is one of the most fundamental and important facts of the time.

The great thinkers of the seventeenth century, with the notable exception of Leibniz, rejected theological explanations of natural phenomena (that is to say, explanations in terms of an ultimate will and purpose which transcended scientific inquiry) and saw instead a universe which

could be understood rationally by the analysis of carefully collected information. This was a change from a supernatural to a mathematical view of the universe. Mathematics was one of two fundamental sets of tools which gave man his new understanding of the universe. The other was the development of precision instruments, which could be used for assembling and measuring significant data. To take just one example, the telescope, invented in 1608 by two Dutchmen and improved and developed by Galileo and others, demonstrated beyond all doubt the validity of the Copernican system of astronomy, which, in the sixteenth century, had rejected traditional views of the earth as the centre of the universe to postulate the idea that it revolved around the sun.

The growing emphasis on rational calculation received its greatest encouragement from developments in mathematics. The importance of mathematics in the seventeenth century scientific revolution can hardly be over-stressed. The century was not only one of the greatest periods of progress in the history of mathematics, it was also

the period in which mathematical knowledge and methods had the greatest influence on the growth of knowledge in other fields, and consequently on the general development of human life. It is difficult to say why there should have been a great period in mathematics at precisely this time. The main reason is probably the emergence of a number of mathematicians of genius, each of whom built on the work of his predecessors to produce general rules about mathematical truths which previously had been understood only separately and not in their interconnections.

Great advances in mathematics

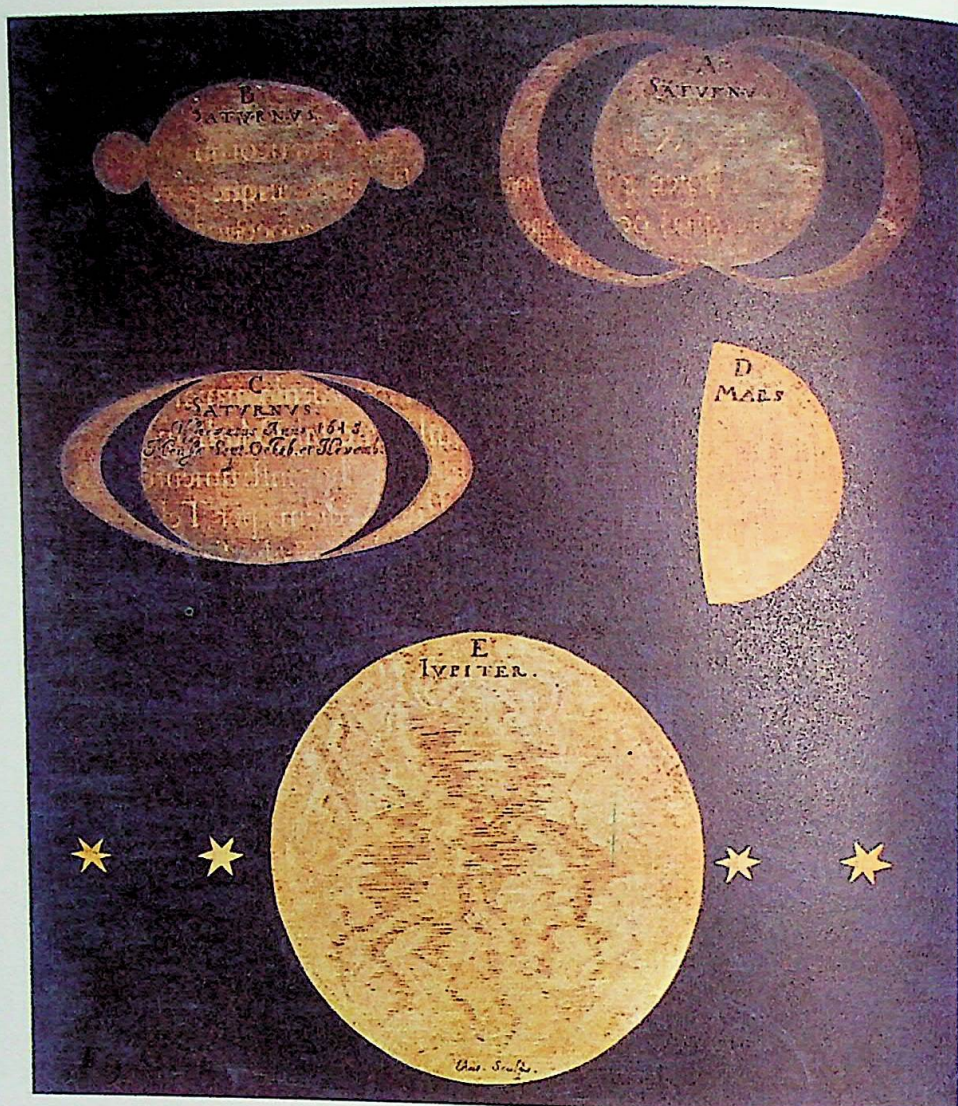
The mathematical advances of the century were made on the broadest possible front, but perhaps the greatest single mathematical achievement of the period was the calculus. The calculus should not be regarded as a sudden invention. It was rather the completion and synthesis by two great mathematical minds, Leibniz and Newton, of the work of a number of other men. Newton and Leibniz worked independently of each

other, and much ink has been spilled in discussing their relative shares of the credit. Whatever the verdict, it is certain that both deserve a great deal of praise for their work on one of the most practically useful instruments of calculation which has ever been devised by man. It provides the means of solving the almost endless variety of problems which turn on the relationship between changing quantities and is, in fact, a method which can be used for almost all difficult calculations.

One of the mathematicians whose work was of great importance in the pre-history of the calculus was the Frenchman René Descartes, whose even greater fame as a philosopher will merit attention later on. As a boy Descartes acquired a liking for mathematics, 'because of the certainty of its proofs and the evidence of its reasonings.' This love remained with him for the rest of his life and led to the production of his most important scientific work, the *Geometry* of 1637, in which he laid the foundations of analytical geometry. He showed that geometric problems could be put into algebraic forms and thus introduced a system by which problems about space (that is, geometrical problems) could be solved by numerical calculations through the application of algebraic and arithmetical methods.

Descartes, in fact, was the originator of *l'esprit géométrique* 'the geometric spirit', which stressed calculation and number as a key to understanding. He provided the basis for a world founded on measurements and his ideas dominated much of the thought of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Fontenelle, the greatest populariser of seventeenth century scientific developments, stated, 'The geometric spirit is not so attached to geometry that it cannot be disentangled and carried over into other areas of knowledge.' There is no doubt that by 1700 Descartes had a legion of disciples who applied his ideas and methods to politics, philosophy, literature, medicine and religion.

One area of Descartes' thought which produced difficulties was his attitude to the relationship between reason and experiment. He believed that men, after discovering a few fundamental principles as a result of observation, could reason out the whole structure of the universe from these basic ideas. Although he lost his earlier confidence in this method before he died, many of his followers ignored these doubts, especially when they applied his ideas to non-scientific fields. There were, however, many exponents of *l'esprit géométrique* who laid the very greatest stress on the importance of experimentation. In this respect they followed in the footsteps of Galileo rather than Descartes.

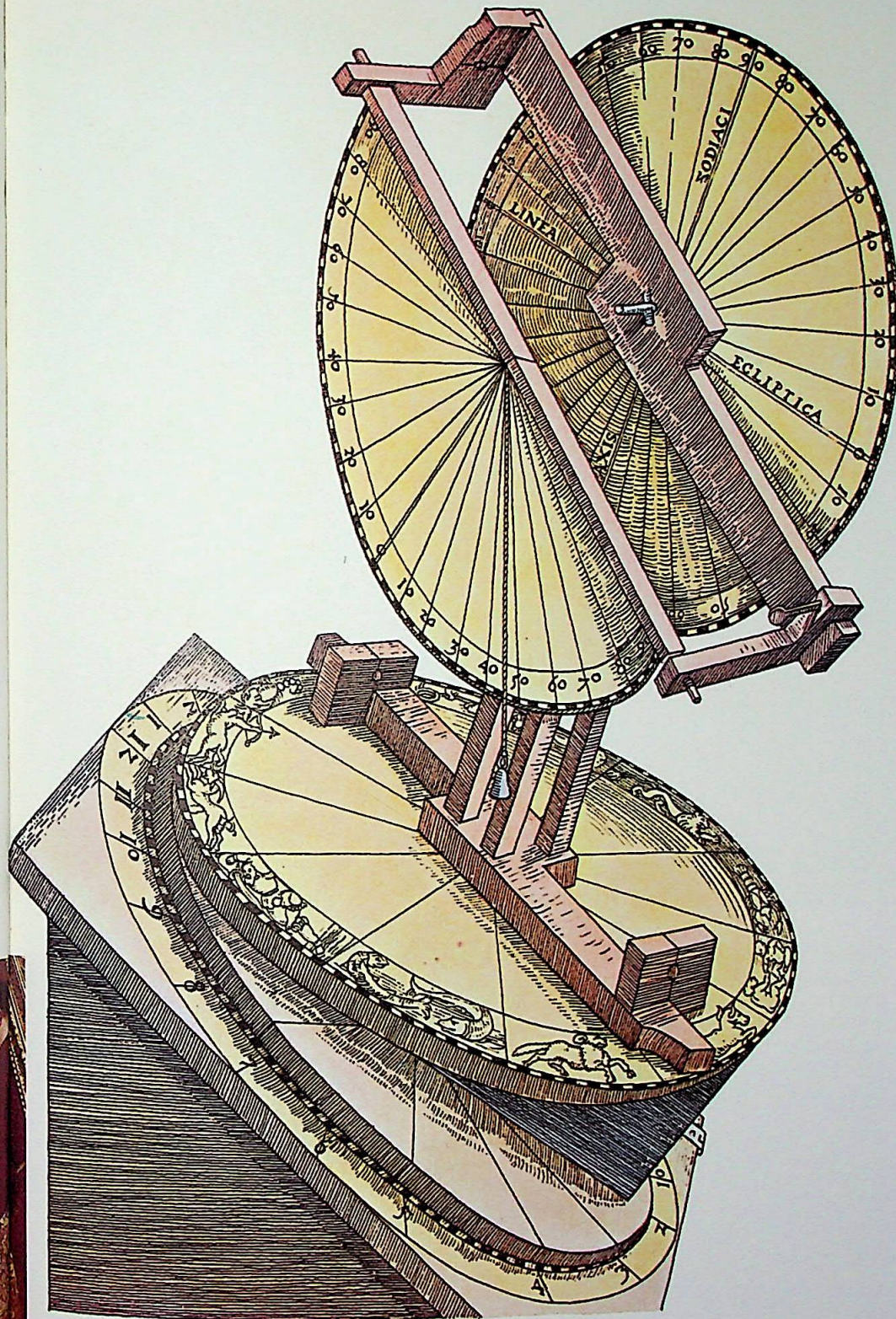


Galileo—the father of modern physics

Galileo can claim to be the 'father' of modern mechanics and physics and the founder of modern observational astronomy. His contribution to mechanics and physics was founded on his work on the theory of motion. In the course of experiments he examined with meticulous care the behaviour of freely falling bodies and of bodies moving horizontally on the earth's surface. In these experiments he anticipated two of Newton's three laws of motion, including the law of inertia. That law—the idea that every particle continues in a state of rest or motion in a straight line unless compelled by a force to change that state—is the real foundation of the modern theory of motion. Galileo was in fact, the first man to see that mathematics and physics, previously kept in separate compartments, should be joined together.

No less important was his astronomical work. In the spring of 1609 he learned of the recent invention of the telescope. He soon built models for himself, making improvements which ensured that his telescopes were the first which could be used for observation of the heavens. By 1610 he was able to announce a series of fundamentally important astronomical discoveries, published under the title *Sidereus Nuncius*. He observed that the Milky Way was composed of a collection of distant stars, saw spots on the sun, discovered the satellites of Jupiter, observed the phases of Venus, and found that the surface of the moon was irregular rather than smooth, as had previously been supposed. In 1611 he visited Rome and demonstrated his telescope to prominent members of the papal court. He was flattered by the cordial reception he received and this encouraged him, two years later, in his *Letters on the Solar Spots*, to raise openly the issue of the Copernican theory. He maintained that the movement of the spots across the face of the sun showed that the earth revolved around it. Copernicus was right.

In 1616, however, the theologians of the Holy Office declared Copernicanism 'false and erroneous' and the Pope admonished Galileo not to defend its doctrines. In 1632 he openly violated this Papal command by publishing his *Dialogues on the two Chief Systems of the World*, a compelling plea for the Copernican system. The work was greeted with acclaim throughout Europe, but the Church authorities decided to prosecute him on 'vehement suspicion' of heresy. He was compelled to stand trial at Rome in 1633 and, under threat of torture, to recant his opinions in a formula in which he 'abjured, cursed and detested' his past errors. He was sentenced to imprisonment during pleasure—immediately commuted by the pope to house arrest for the last eight years of his life on his own little estate



Above left: representations of Saturn, Mars and Jupiter. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Left: Galileo showing his telescope to the doge of Venice. (Museo de la Tribuna di Galileo, Florence.)

Above: apparatus for measuring the height of stars above the horizon. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



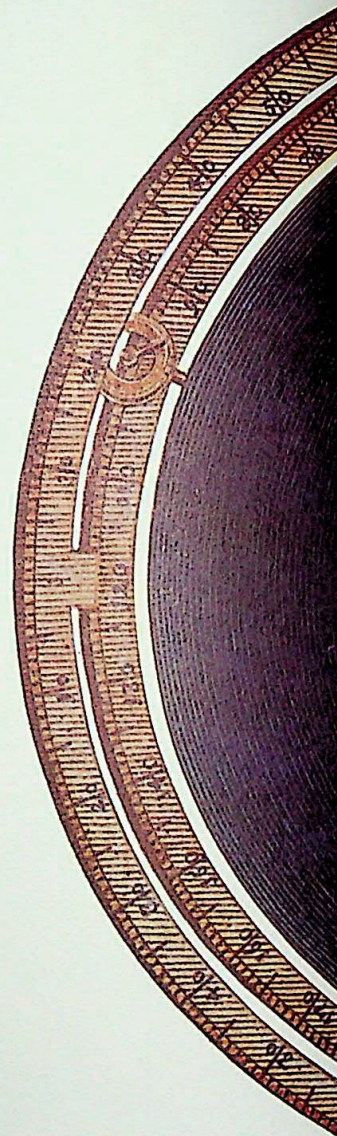
near Florence—and ordered to recite the seven penitential psalms once a week for three years. The sentence was comparatively mild by the standards of the time and no other eminent scientist of the century was forced to recant his opinions, but the fate of the aged Galileo illustrates the fact that scientific freedom was newly and not easily won in the seventeenth century.

Different ideas about the universe

Galileo's fate at the hands of the Inquisition must have discouraged writers who would have liked to challenge traditional views of the universe, and although scholars were well aware of the inadequacies of ancient cosmologies it was some years before the Copernican system was generally accepted. In 1686, however, there appeared a book which was more influential than any other in making Copernicanism fashionable. That was Bernard de Fontenelle's *Entretien sur les Pluralités des Mondes*. Fontenelle is a most interesting man. Born in 1657, he died in 1757, a month before his hundredth

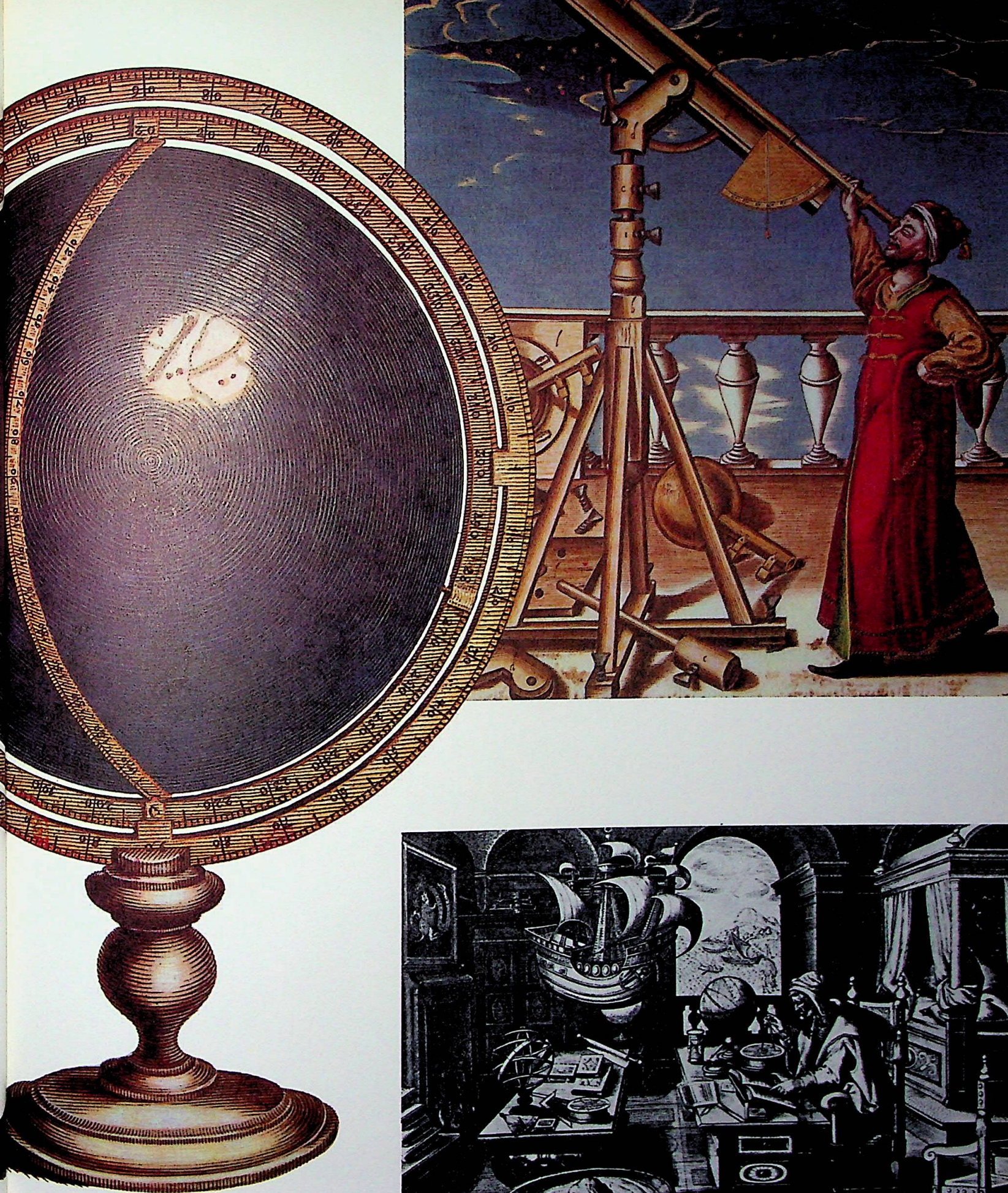
birthday. He was never a scientist of great originality but he kept abreast of all new scientific developments and corresponded with many European scientists. He was the great publicist of the seventeenth century scientific revolution and recorded its achievements in innumerable books. Fontenelle presents a simplified version of Descartes' picture of the universe. This Cartesian cosmology—Descartes' ideas are described as Cartesian and his followers as Cartesians—accepted the basic Copernican thesis of the circulation of the earth around the sun, and was also founded to a considerable extent on Descartes' theory of vortices. According to this, the whole universe consisted of a number of vortices fitting together like soap bubbles. In the centre of each vortex was a star. In the vortex containing the solar system the planets circled round the sun and some planets were surrounded by their own, subsidiary vortices containing satellites, like the moon. The whole universe was filled with a kind of celestial fluid, which kept the stars and planets in their places.

Fontenelle's book was popular but it was

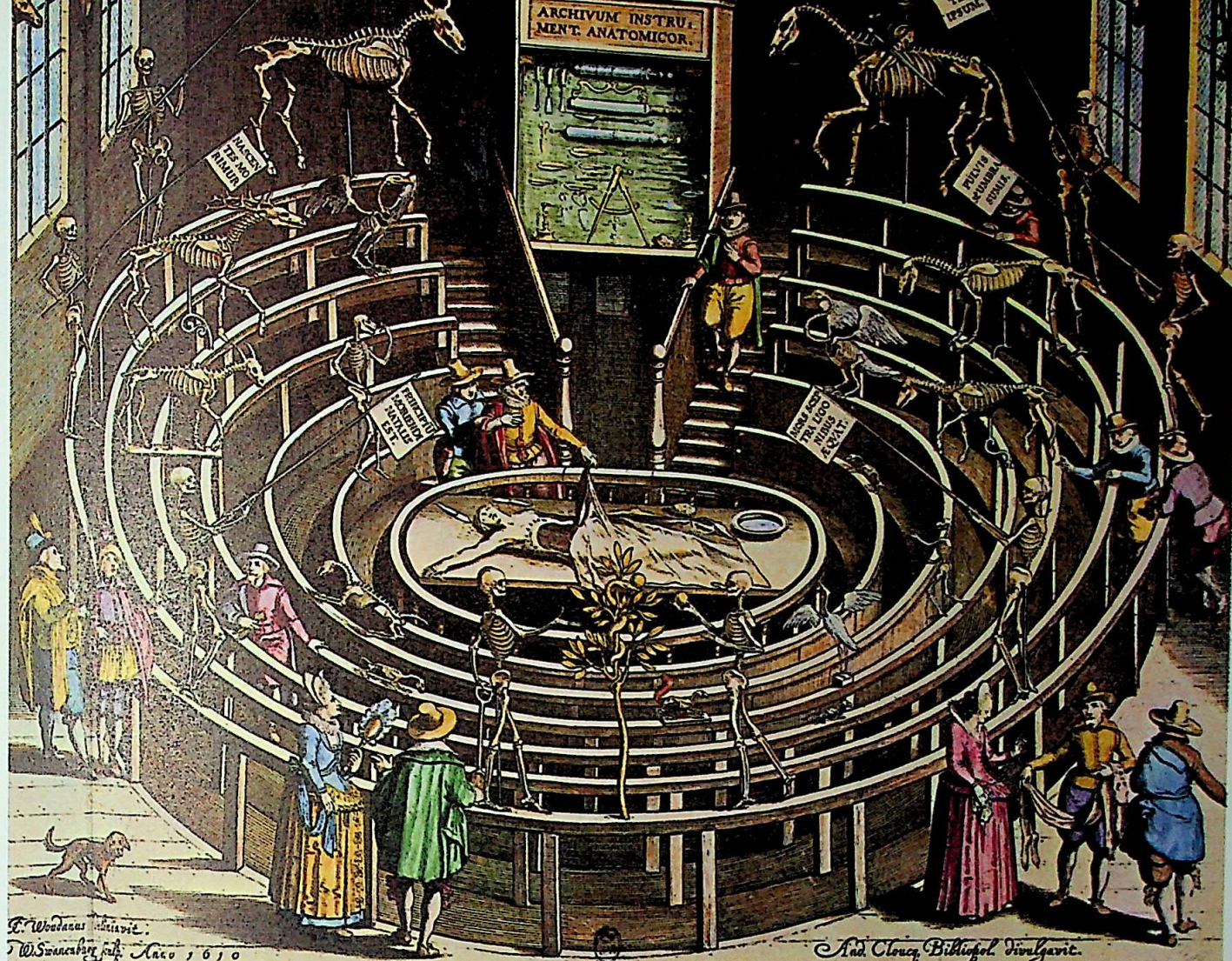


Above left: Kepler, one of the great mathematicians and astronomers of the seventeenth century.

Above right: an astronomical sphere.
Far right: an astronomer and his telescope.
Below right: a scholar in his study.
(All Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)







On the left: Paracelsus, a sixteenth-century doctor who pointed some of the ways to modern medicine and was considered a great authority in the seventeenth century. (Musée du Louvre, Paris.)
Above: an anatomical theatre at Leyden. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

out of date the year after it was published, for in 1687 Newton's *Principia Mathematica*, one of the great scientific works of all time, appeared. Although the *Principia* was certainly Newton's masterpiece, it merely set the seal on a lifetime of scientific achievement. Isaac Newton was born in 1642 in the Lincolnshire village of Woolsthorpe. He went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1661, taking his degree in 1665, when the university was closed because of the spreading of the Great Plague and Newton returned to Woolsthorpe where he remained until the spring of 1667. That year and a half, when he was twenty-three and twenty-four, was perhaps the most creative period in his entire life, as he himself recognised later when he said that he was then in his 'prime... for invention, and minded mathematics and philosophy (i.e. science) more than at any time since.'

Newton and the law of gravity

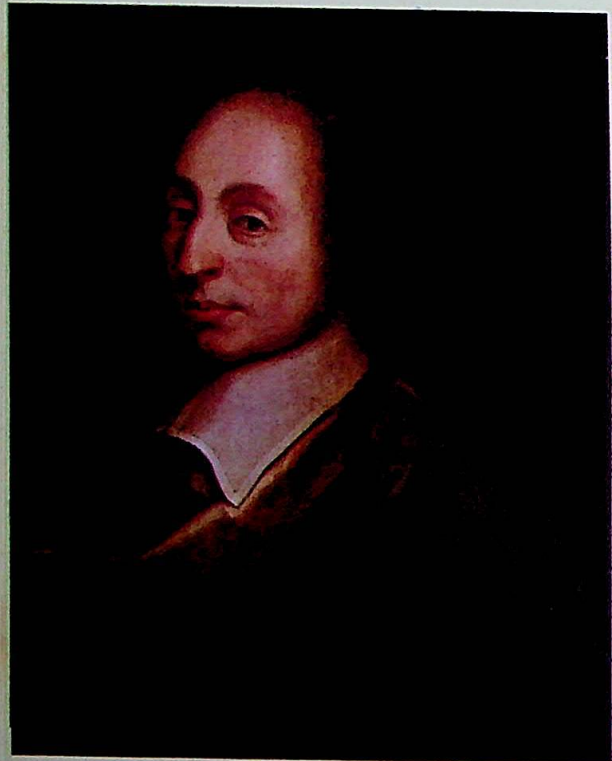
Newton made, during that brief period, some epoch-making contributions to the history of science, including the foundations of the differential and integral calculus, and the analysis of the composition of white light and the nature of colours, a piece of research which was the foundation of the technique of spectrum analysis. His great discovery was his conception of the force of gravitation extending from the earth to the moon.

Altogether, it was a series of scientific and mathematical advances unequalled in importance since the time of the Greeks. Newton's old Cambridge teacher, Isaac Barrow, himself a distinguished scientist, recognised his pupil's soaring genius and resigned the Lucasian chair of mathematics in 1669 so that Newton, then twenty-six years old, could succeed him.

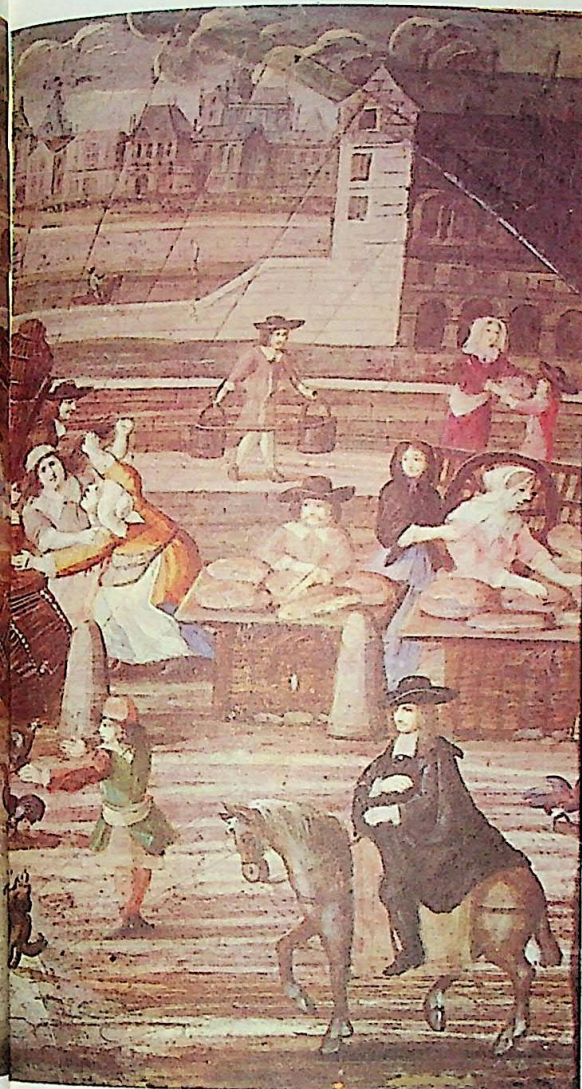
Newton returned to the early work on light which he had done in 1666 and began researches which found final expression in his *Optics*, published in 1704. His theories about light gave rise to considerable controversy in his own time, notably with Robert Hooke, a fellow member with Newton of the Royal Society, and the

protagonist of rival ideas on the subject. Hooke advocated a wave theory of light, according to which light consists of a series of pulses or waves transmitted through the ether pervading space. Newton, on the other hand, advanced a combination of wave and corpuscular theories. According to him, light consists of a series of corpuscles emanating from luminous bodies. These corpuscles give rise to waves as they pass through the ether. Newton's ideas have returned to fashion in our own time, in which there has been in scientific thinking a fusion of elements of both corpuscular and wave theories.

Newton set out the results of some of his early work on light in a paper which he presented to the Royal Society in 1672. The controversy which this aroused led him to explain his position. 'The best and safest method of philosophising [that is, of conducting scientific enquiries] seems to be, first to enquire diligently into the properties of things, and of establishing these properties by experiment, and then to proceed more slowly to hypotheses for the explanation of them.' There could hardly be a clearer statement of the importance of the experimental method.



Above left: Cornelius Jansen, bishop of Ypres, author of the *Augustinus*.
 Left: Blaise Pascal, one of the great mathematicians of the seventeenth century, was also an ardent defender of Christianity and supporter of Jansenism. (Both Musée de Versailles.)
 Above: a Parisian market in the mid-seventeenth century. (Musée Carnavalet, Paris.)



An early telescope

One very important by-product of Newton's work on optics was his invention of the reflecting telescope, a new form of the instrument which ultimately enabled very large telescopes to be constructed. One of the earliest of Newton's telescopes, which he presented to the Royal Society in December 1671, has a two inch mirror. It is a direct ancestor of the world's largest telescope, the giant 200 inch reflector at the Mount Palomar observatory in the United States.

Important though Newton's work on optics was, his main claim to immortality rests rightly on his *Principia Mathematica* begun in 1686 and published the following year. The fame it brought Newton inspired Alexander Pope to write his famous *Epitaph intended for Sir Isaac Newton*:

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night.
God said, Let Newton be! and all was light.
This tribute to genius should not, however, be allowed to obscure the fact that the *Principia* was a synthesis of advances made during the two preceding centuries and

owed much to the researches of men like Leonardo da Vinci, Kepler, Galileo, Huygens, Hooke, and Halley.

This is not, of course, to belittle Newton's achievement. It was he who produced the final proofs and in so doing created a picture of the universe as a rigid mechanism held together by absolute mechanical laws founded on the principle of gravitation, a principle which accounted for the movement of heavenly bodies, of the tides, and of objects on earth. It was not until about fifty years later that Newton's explanation won general acceptance in preference to Descartes' theory of vortices. After that, however, Newton reigned supreme for some 200 years. It was only from the early twentieth century onwards, with Albert Einstein's development of the special and general theories of relativity, that Newton's theory of the universe could no longer be regarded as final. The discovery that the mass of a body varies with its velocity changed the whole terms of reference of physics.

The publication of the *Principia* in 1687 marked a turning point in the history of science in the short as well as in the long term. Nine decades of tremendously productive research were followed by thirty or forty largely barren years. It was as if the publication of Newton's masterpiece had exhausted the creative spirit of the age.

On first thoughts, this cessation of important discoveries seems surprising. There were many reasons why uninterrupted progress might have been expected. By 1700 European scholars formed an international community whose members exchanged information about their researches in voluminous correspondence, and through the publication of learned periodicals. The new scientific learning was also slowly establishing itself in the universities, and, above all, *l'esprit géométrique* provided a favourable intellectual climate for continuing investigation and experiment. It also, however, provided a vehicle for the ideas of its founder, Descartes, and here perhaps lies a clue to the paucity of fundamental scientific discoveries between about 1690 and 1720. The authority of Descartes and Newton was so great that it cast a shadow over disciples who tended to feel that they had little to add to the words of masters whose teachings they could only expound.

New discoveries in practice

The eagerness also of the generation of 1700 to apply the creative discoveries of the previous century to technology may have left it less time for thinking about further fundamental advances. The years around the turn of the century saw many developments in applied technology: the improvement of pumps for mines, the application of the new mathematics and physics to the

problems of architecture, and the development of the steam engine are examples. Indeed, throughout the eighteenth century, engineers and other technicians continued the gigantic task of applying the 'pure' scientific achievements of the period 1600 to 1690 for the practical benefit of mankind.

In the seventeenth century the influence of *l'esprit géométrique* made itself felt throughout the entire learned world. Almost all scholars shared the belief that the world could be understood by the aid of human reason and described in terms of mathematics. This belief influenced the style and content of their work in other fields, such as political thought, philosophy, literature, medicine, and religion.

A name which can usefully be used to link seventeenth century scientific and political studies is that of Sir William Petty, one of the early fellows of the Royal Society. Petty worked on figures of trade and population and expressed firm belief in the benefit of applying the results to the problems of government. As such, he was the founder of what contemporaries called political arithmetic and we would call statistics. His ideas were to have a great future. The comparatively rudimentary calculations which he could make were developed in subsequent centuries into a sophisticated science which is the foundation of modern administration, as any citizen who has been deluged with official forms, containing demands for information, will quickly realise.

This general influence which the scientific spirit exercised on administrative and social problems can also be traced in the work of the three greatest political theorists of the century, the Englishmen Thomas Hobbes and John Locke and the Dutch Jew Benedict de Spinoza. All three shared the assumption that the same cause would always produce the same effect, one of the most fundamental of scientific theories.

Hobbes, who was born in 1588, grew to manhood and spent the middle years of his life at a time when the Elizabethan system of government was collapsing under the ineffective rule of James I and Charles I. When civil war broke out in 1642 the conflict turned largely on the question of sovereignty, on where, in other words, ultimate power in the English state lay. It was this problem of sovereignty which provided the central theme of Hobbes's most famous work, *Leviathan*, published in 1651, two years after England executed her king. The title is metaphorical. *Leviathan* is the state and Hobbes chose the name because in the Vulgate version of the Book of Job we are told that no power on earth can compare with *Leviathan*. In that time of turmoil in England Hobbes turned, in fact, to the idea of the supremacy in government of one selected man or assembly, but preferably one man, who would exercise all legislative, executive and judicial power in both the secular and ecclesiastical fields.



Above: Colbert, Louis XIV's most important minister from 1661 to 1683. He controlled the cultural and artistic as well as the economic life of the state. On the right: Louis XIV visiting the celebrated Gobelin factory, which produced magnificent tapestries. French luxury industries were very successful during his reign. (Both Musée de Versailles.)



All men are selfish

Hobbes based his theory of the need for such a sovereign on a deterministic view of human nature. All human actions, he argued, were founded on self-interest. In such circumstances every man needed a guarantee of the good behaviour of his fellows, otherwise his life would be 'poor, nasty, brutish and short.' Such a guarantee could only be obtained by vesting all authority in a sovereign power which would be able to keep all men in order.

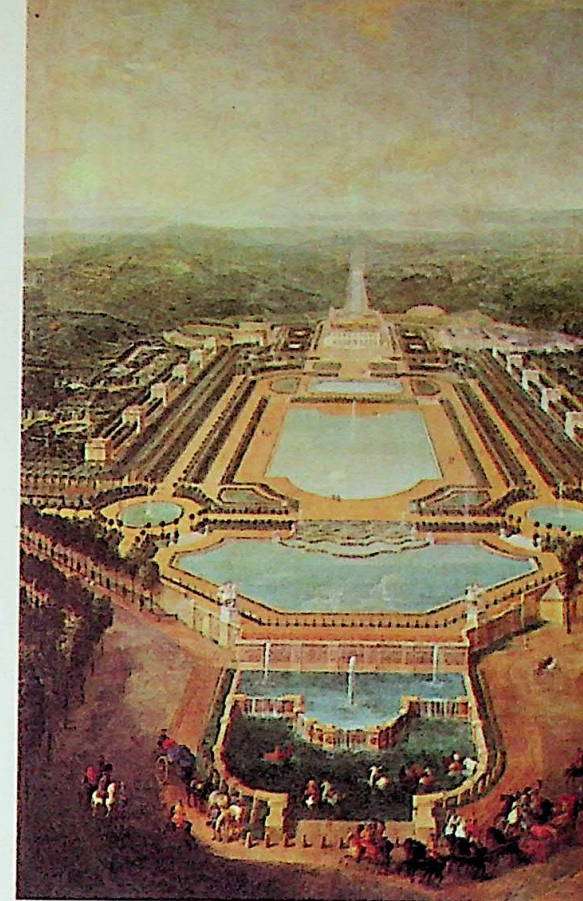
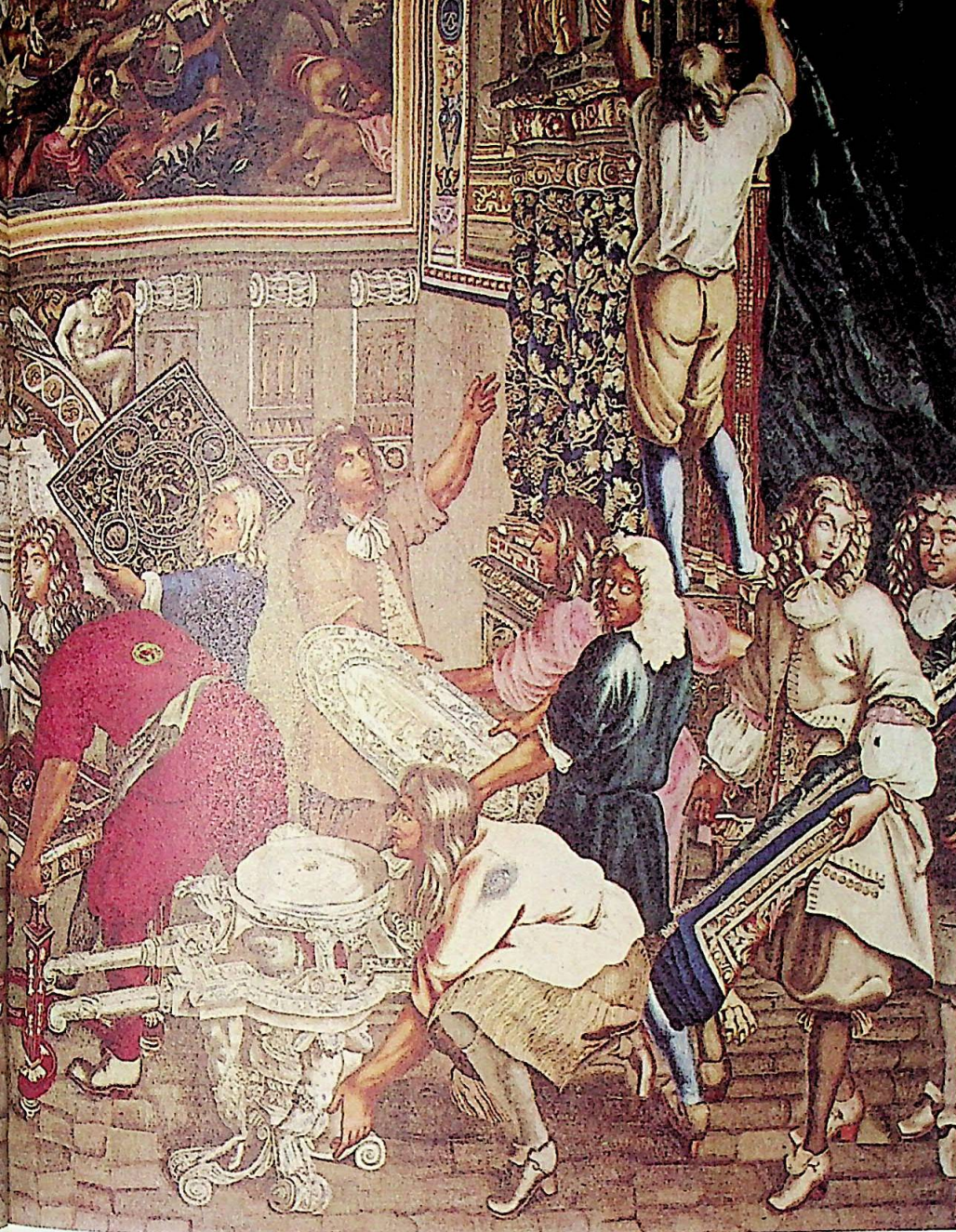
Hobbes's state was founded on a social contract. The ruler could treat his subjects in any way he chose as long as he was able to keep the peace, but 'the obligation of subjects to sovereign is understood to last as long as and no longer than the power lasts by which he is able to protect them.' These last lines explain why Hobbes's views failed to become an orthodox defence of mon-

archy. The Leviathan he conceived, with complete ability to overawe and at the same time protect its subjects, had seldom, if ever, existed. The arguments in *Leviathan* are, however, worked out with a rigid consistency which pays tribute to the scientific spirit of the age in which it was written.

Spinoza, one of the other two outstanding political theorists of the century, was also on the side of authority. He too denied any rights to individuals against the state. In his last work on politics, the *Tractatus Politicus*, published in 1677 after his death in the same year, he supported Hobbes's view that in a state of nature most men would strive for their own aggrandisement to the detriment of others. The only remedy was absolute government which had the task of preserving the security and peace of its subjects. Unlike Hobbes, however, Spinoza saw that true peace was much more than just the absence of war. It meant, in fact, real concord among

men, and a wise government, he argued, would preserve peace by granting, at its discretion, the maximum possible freedom to the people under its control, especially in matters of thought and religion.

John Locke, our third great writer on politics, had very different views from Hobbes and Spinoza. He was on the side of liberty rather than authority. It used to be thought that his most important work on political theory, his second *Treatise on Government*, which appeared in October 1689 (though dated 1690) was written specifically to vindicate the Revolution of 1688. We now know, however, that it was composed earlier in the 1680s. In it Locke gives his own theory of 'the true original extent and end of civil government.' Unlike Hobbes he assumed that man was naturally good and that he enjoyed inalienable rights to liberty and property which he retained when he made the original agreement which



Above: the chateau of Marly, one of several splendid lesser palaces which Louis XIV built in the neighbourhood of Versailles. (Musée de Versailles.)

brought ordered society into existence. In making this 'social contract', in fact, men gave up their equality and natural 'executive' power with the specific objective of ensuring the preservation of their liberty and property. Rulers must, therefore, conduct their governments in the interests of their subjects. If they became tyrannical then the people were entitled to rebel and expel them from power—the right of resistance.

Ancestor of liberalism

Europe as a whole was at first more interested in Locke's philosophy than in his politics. Later on, however, in the eighteenth century, his political doctrines exercised very great influence abroad. He became the ancestor of much of the liberalism which played an important role in the life and politics of eighteenth-century America and France and is still such a powerful force.

Political theory, or political philosophy, as it is sometimes called, can be regarded as a branch of philosophy as a whole and two of the leading political theorists of the age, Spinoza and Locke, also wrote very important works on general philosophy. The seventeenth century is an age of the very greatest importance in the history of philosophy. In the words of Sir George Clark it 'contains the beginning of a chapter, the most abrupt of all the new beginnings since the rise of our philosophical tradition amongst the ancient Greeks.' The word 'philosophy' was used in the seventeenth century to mean what is now called science. We have already discussed scientific developments and must now consider philosophy as the term is understood in our own time: the study of the ultimate problems which are raised in the search for truth and knowledge about man and the universe.

Medieval philosophical systems had been

dogmatic: truth was the prerogative of authority, whether represented by the writings of Aristotle or the teachings of the Church. The new philosophy which developed in the seventeenth century was stimulated and indeed made possible by two great movements of thought, the Reformation and the scientific movement of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Reformation had little direct effect on philosophical speculation—it laid stress on faith rather than on learning and reason—but by flouting the authority of the Church in religious matters the reformers laid it open to challenge in other fields. The scientific movement, on the other hand, exercised a direct and powerful effect on philosophical thought. Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo and their successors presented new scientific views of the universe which led thinking men to speculate anew about the world and man's place in it. The influence of



the new mathematics was profound—the greatest philosophers of the seventeenth century, with the exception of Locke, were all mathematicians of distinction.

That is certainly true of the man who can justly be called the 'father of modern philosophy'. Descartes' methods were as important as the conclusions which he reached. The medieval schoolmen had gone about their work by systematically arranging all that was known about a subject and then arguing from the assembled material. That was induction, but clearly of a very different kind from the inductive methods, based upon practical experiments, which were later used by Galileo and Newton. Descartes, in contrast, stressed the importance of *deduction* in his principal philosophical works, like the French *Discours sur la methode*, published in 1637 and probably one of the two most influential books of the century (Newton's *Principia* was the other). His method was to begin by doubting everything and then to ask whether or not there was some truth which was so self-evident that it was not open to question. If he could find such a certainty he could then deduce other truths from it. It was clear, rational methodology, closely related to mathematics.



Daily life during the Grand Siècle.
Far left: a baker.
Left: a travelling salesman.
Above: the manufacture of playing cards.
Card games were a favourite pastime at court. Great noblemen lost fortunes in a single game. (All Musée Carnavalet, Paris.)

Reason is supreme

Descartes found his fundamental truth in the famous proposition, *Cogito, ergo sum*, 'I think, therefore I am', the idea that the processes which take place within the individual mind—such as understanding, calculating and doubting—prove beyond all question that the mind itself exists. From this starting point he went on to infer other truths which, he maintained, necessarily followed. We cannot trace his arguments in detail here. It must suffice to note that he constructed a universe which consisted of a world of experience and a world beyond experience. The existence of God, in the world beyond experience, was necessary because it was only from a being such as God that men could derive concepts which were outside their own experience: for example, eternity, immortality, omnipotence. The world of experience, the external world which men saw all around them, was not altogether as it seemed, because men's senses sometimes produced illusions about it. Still, it did have real qualities, which could be measured in mathematical terms.

In the Cartesian universe human reason was supreme. It led to a knowledge of God

in the world beyond experience, and in the external world it seemed to make possible a mastery of man's environment.

Descartes' works became the point of departure for both of the opposing schools of thought into which philosophy divided during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the rationalists and the empiricists. Those followers who stressed the rationalist side of his teaching and took the name 'Cartesians' were often men of considerable intellectual ability but they were all far inferior in mental powers to another rationalist, Spinoza, whom we have already met as a political theorist, but whose greater claim to fame is as a philosopher. Although far too distinguished to be simply labelled as a Cartesian, Spinoza was in complete agreement with Descartes' methods and set out his own philosophical conclusions in the form of a deductive system in his greatest work, the *Ethics*, published in 1677.

Spinoza's philosophy is notoriously difficult to understand, but his conception of God, unlike Descartes', is not that of a pure spirit endowed with intellect and will. God, for Spinoza, combined attributes of matter and mind in a single substance, and was as much body as spirit. The physical laws which men knew were simply the operation of the



*On the right: the great philosopher Descartes, one of the greatest intellectual influences of the seventeenth century.
(Musée du Louvre, Paris.)*

*Left: Descartes explaining his theories to Queen Christina of Sweden who was extremely interested in the sciences.
(Musée de Versailles.)*

*She also concerned herself with technological processes like the forging of iron (above).
(National Gallery, Prague.)*



divine mind: God and nature were one. Spinoza's philosophy, despite its frequent obscurity and difficulty, had a very practical purpose. It was designed to teach men how to live, as the title of his great work, *Ethics*, suggests. Only God was real, and all other beings and objects must be regarded in the context of eternity. This, however, did not preclude the need for human beings to try to live lives of virtue founded on reason and on intellectual love of God.

Shaping the mind

A few years after Spinoza's death John Locke arrived in Holland as a political exile. At that time he was already putting together the ideas which he published in 1690 as his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Locke was the founder of a distinctively British philosophical school which exerted great influence on European thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but he too owed much to Des-

cartes, from whom he took his confidence in clear and distinct knowledge and his ideas about the fundamental distinction between mind and matter. However, he approached the problems of philosophy in a totally different way from Descartes. He used what he called a 'historical, plain method,' an approach stressing the role of experience in the gaining of knowledge, in which he turned away from the construction of elaborate philosophical systems which had so preoccupied Descartes and Spinoza, to examine human ideas and their significance. In his *Essay* he took the contents of the individual mind and examined them one by one to see what they were. The mind, he argued, was empty to begin with, but it soon filled up with simple data, which were impressed upon it by experience. It then worked upon these elementary ideas to form more complex thoughts. The whole of knowledge, in other words, consisted of a collection and comparison of ideas.

Locke's work was much less ambitious in

its aims than that of his predecessors. He himself wrote 'it is... enough to be employed as an underlabourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way of knowledge'. He also makes much easier reading. His work has none of their difficulties of mathematical form and hard vocabularies of technical terms.

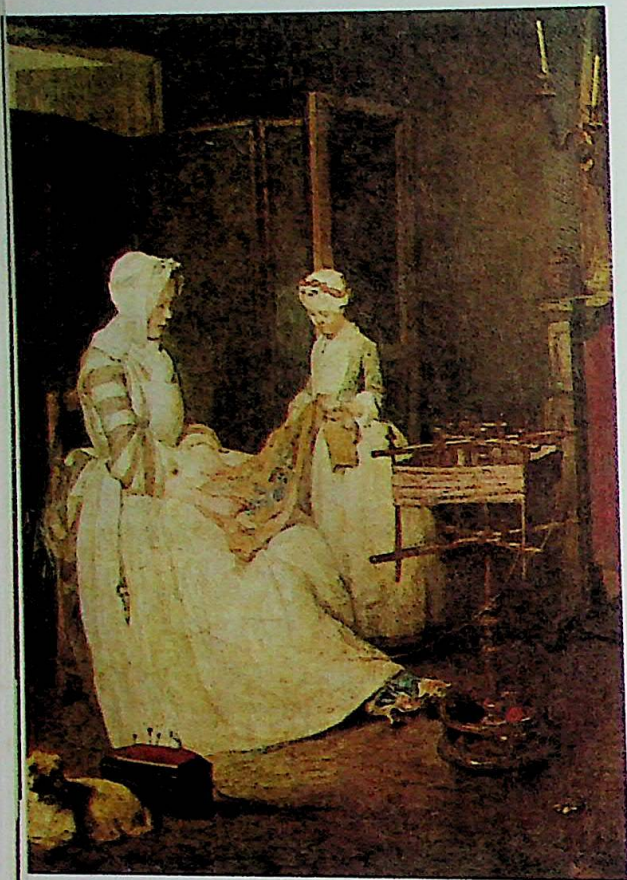
In any survey, however brief, of seventeenth century philosophy, it would be wrong to omit the name of Leibniz, a man of many-sided genius, mathematician, historian, theologian and politician as well as philosopher. He never worked out his philosophy in a single, comprehensive treatise, but his ideas were systematised by others after his death. According to Leibniz the universe consisted of an infinite number of simple substances, each complete in itself, which he called 'monads'. The highest monads were the souls of men, but all monads were spiritual realities. Material things did not, in the strict sense, exist: it was only at the confused level of sense perception that they seemed to be real. Harmony among the monads was maintained by God, who, having an infinite number of possibilities to choose from, created the best of all possible worlds. This is Leibniz's famous optimism, which was so ruthlessly caricatured by Voltaire in *Candide*.

Of course, despite his genius, he was a man of his times, limited in his ideas by his own concepts and those of his fellow scientists. Just as Newton did not anticipate the idea of relativity, so Leibniz, even though he stressed that the monads were always changing, did not really understand that the essence of anything lies in its development in time: the idea of evolution.

Pioneers of medicine

The influence of the predominantly mathematical and scientific spirit of the seventeenth century can be seen in medicine, literature and painting no less than in political and philosophical thought. In medicine one school adopted Descartes' view that the human body is a machine. Prominent among these iatrophysicists as they called themselves, was the Italian Giovanni Borelli, who was particularly interested in the physical laws which govern the body's movements. The greatest medical pioneer of the century, however, was the Englishman William Harvey. In 1628 he set out his discovery of the circulation of the blood in his *De Motu Cordis et Sanguinis*, a fundamentally important work which was the result of accurate observations and careful experiments.

Harvey revolutionised medicine by proving a series of closely interrelated points: that blood is propelled from the heart at regular intervals and in a constant stream, that the same blood circulates in both veins and arteries, and that the heart propels only blood and not 'air' as well, as had formerly



On the right: the grape harvest. (*Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.*)
On the left: a working mother by Chardin, a French artist born at the turn of the seventeenth century, who was a protagonist of the intimate and realistic style of which the Dutch painters of the period were the greatest exponents. (*Musée du Louvre, Paris.*)



been supposed. He made other important contributions to medical knowledge, especially in the field of embryology, and the new experimental methods which he used in his work were as important as the actual results which he obtained. They pointed the way to the future, just as *De Motu Cordis* itself became the starting point for further research in physiology and anatomy, such as that of the Italian, Marcello Malpighi, Harvey's greatest immediate successor, who used the microscope to demonstrate the circulation of the blood in the capillaries.

In literature, the growth of the scientific spirit is revealed in stylistic changes which took place during the course of the century. Many early seventeenth century writers sought to impress by a difficult style—the poetry of John Donne and of his Italian and Spanish contemporaries is a good illustration of this—but as the years went by simplicity, lucidity and exactitude, mathematical ideals, became the fashion. They were exemplified during the century by the prose of Pascal and at its end by the works of Addison and Pope. The same kind of general tendency can be detected in painting. As the years passed there was a trend away from the baroque grandeur and sumptuousness found in the early part of the seventeenth century in the works of Rubens towards the greater simplicity and restraint which characterised the art of Watteau at the end of Louis XIV's reign.

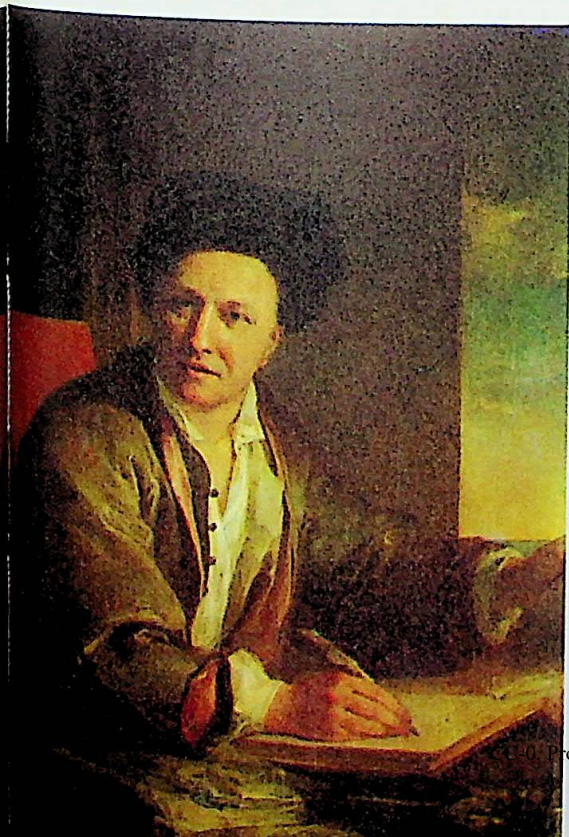
The Church opposes science

When we turn from art and literature to religion we find that the Church contributed little to the scientific revolution—in many ways it was a positive hindrance, witness Galileo—and that only one man made a front rank place for himself both as a defender of Christianity and a leader of the scientific revival. That was the Frenchman Blaise Pascal, a mathematician of great distinction who supported Jansenism in his *Lettres Provinciales*, which appeared in 1656–7. His *Pensées*, published after his death in 1662, are fragments of a planned defence of Christianity.

The most important links between established religion and the scientific spirit in the seventeenth century are, in fact, to be found in the destructive effects which the latter had on the former. The Bible had previously been thought to be beyond criticism. Now, however, Cartesian sceptics argued that it should be subjected to textual analysis, just like any other document. Richard Simon, a Catholic priest, published several critical histories of the Old and New Testaments, works which revealed that the text of the Bible was full of difficulties of chronology and problems of vocabulary and meaning. His work was condemned by Catholics and Protestants alike, but, together with that of the great sceptic Pierre Bayle, it provided a great fund of arguments to support the Deists in the eighteenth century.







Indeed the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, the years from roughly 1680 to 1720, witnessed what has been aptly called a crisis in the European mind. Between these dates, large numbers of educated men, having absorbed the main ideas of the scientific revolution of the previous hundred years, began to question the very basis of traditional Christian teaching. Before 1680 only isolated thinkers had doubted that Christ was a Man-God who died on the cross for the salvation of mankind. After 1720 very many intelligent men questioned that belief. It was an intellectual revolution, a change from an attitude of mind which accepted traditional religious fundamentals to one which exalted scepticism and the secular spirit. The fact that the uneducated masses of Europe continued to adhere to old ideas only serves to highlight the change in attitude of so many intelligent men.

The new army

Besides vast political, social, scientific and intellectual changes, the seventeenth century

also produced a military revolution. Professor Michael Roberts, one of the leading authorities on the subject, traces its beginnings back to the 1560s, but its main stages certainly came in the early seventeenth century and had profound effects not merely on military affairs in later years but on many other aspects of life as well.

In the mid-sixteenth century the dominant formation on west European battlegrounds was the Spanish *tercio*, or its equivalent. A *tercio* consisted of a square of pikemen and musketeers some 3,000 strong and epitomised the fact that infantry had replaced the heavy cavalry of the Middle Ages as the

Above: gathering the harvest. (Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.)

Far left: 'The Benediction', another of Chardin's realistic pictures of family life. (Musée du Louvre, Paris.)

Left: Fontenelle, the greatest populariser of seventeenth-century scientific developments. He died in 1757 at the age of ninety-nine. (Musée de Versailles.)

most important arm on the battlefield. The huge size of sixteenth-century infantry units made them difficult to manoeuvre quickly with the result that tactics on the battlefield tended to be defensive rather than offensive. Commanders, in fact, usually avoided battles if at all possible.

The revolution which changed this situation took place in two stages, between about 1590 and 1632, after an earlier, abortive start under Erik XIV of Sweden in the 1560s. The first stage, under the leadership of Prince Maurice of Orange, lasted until 1609. The second, under Sweden's Gustavus Adolphus, from about 1617 to 1632. Maurice in his reforms returned to Roman models, both with regard to the size of his army units and their order of battle. His 'battalions' were about 500 strong—roughly the size of a Roman cohort—and he also favoured a linear order of battle as opposed to the square formation of the tercios. These changes made for much greater flexibility and manoeuvreability, but they did not win general acceptance in Europe, partly because they did not lead to any really striking successes against the tercios. It is notable that Maurice used the innovations in an essentially defensive spirit. He fully shared the general contemporary dislike of battles.

This defensive attitude was completely changed by Gustavus Adolphus, who demonstrated the ability of the new linear formations to win successes in attack as well as in defence. He took over Maurice's smaller units, but, by a series of administrative and tactical reforms, vastly increased their effectiveness on the battlefield. Junior officers and N.C.O.s were given much greater responsibility and initiative on the field and musketeers and pikemen were linked together in the closest possible combination, which was greatly aided by Gustavus's exploitation of the salvo—he was the first to employ it at point blank range.

These changes, which were accompanied by important improvements in the mobility of the Swedish field artillery, demonstrated their significance in a series of victories during the Thirty Years' War, of which the battle of Breitenfeld in 1631 was perhaps the most notable. The days of the tercio were numbered, and in 1643 the great Condé, then a young man, smashed once and for all the legend of their invincibility at the battle of Rocroi. With that victory the military leadership of Europe, to which Gustavus Adolphus had aspired before his death in 1632, passed indubitably from Spain to France.

Changes in strategy

In the great battles of the Thirty Years' War, which marked the success of Gustavus's revolution, offensive tactics came back into favour after the long defensive interlude of the sixteenth century. At the same time, equally important strategic changes took

Europe in 1721. By the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, which ended the War of the Spanish Succession, the possessions of Spain in Italy and the Netherlands passed to Austria. The Dutch received the right to maintain 'barrier forts' in the (now) Austrian Netherlands against France. The Turkish advance in southeastern Europe in the latter part of the seventeenth century had been checked by Austria, which had pushed

the Turks back as far as Serbia. The Treaty of Nystadt of 1721 confirmed the change in the balance of power resulting from the Northern War. Sweden lost its dominant position and the Baltic provinces which Russia gained from Sweden gave Peter the Great his 'window to the West'.





ambitiousness and scale of military operations.

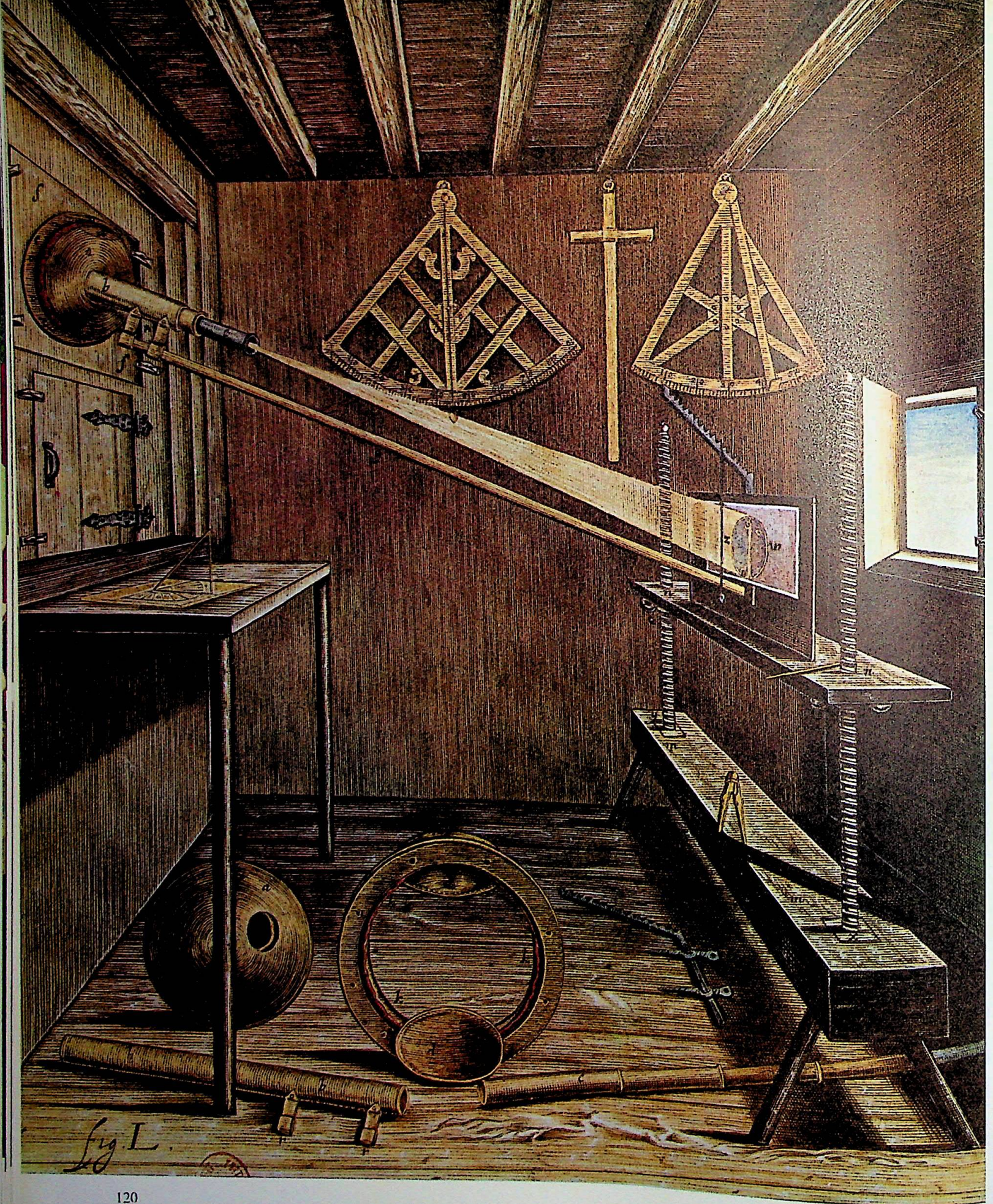
The most noticeable result was a great increase in the size of armies. Philip II's Spain, the greatest military power in the later sixteenth century, had an army of perhaps 40,000 men. Louis XIV's France, the leading military power of the seventeenth century, had 400,000 men under arms during the king's later years. Throughout much of Europe, in fact, the seventeenth century saw the permanent establishment of armies on a scale which had not been approached before. In the 1620s Brandenburg's army was less than 1,000 strong. In the early eighteenth century, in the reign of Frederick William I, it consisted of over 80,000 men.

Navies too grew rapidly in size. Spain, the greatest naval power of the sixteenth century, declined in importance at sea as well as on land during the seventeenth. By the end of the war of the Spanish Succession, indeed, she had almost no navy left at all. In any event, even at the height of her power in the sixteenth century she had never had a large, organised royal navy, maintained by the state for the purposes of war alone. Neither, of course, had her enemies. All depended, as the Armada campaign clearly showed, on large numbers of hired and commandeered merchantmen to supplement small nuclei of specialised warships. In the seventeenth century England, Holland and France challenged for the position which Spain had previously occupied. The three Anglo-Dutch wars and the threats which Colbert's naval building programme posed to both the maritime powers led to a considerable increase in the number and great improvements in the construction of specialised warships, and to significant developments in the administration behind them.

This vast growth in the size of armies and navies helped to increase social mobility. It is true that few of the leading commanders in the seventeenth century were of humble origin, but below the very highest ranks, and especially perhaps in naval and military administration, poor young men of intrinsic ability could readily make a mark which enabled them to raise their status in the world. Of more fundamental importance for the history of the times was the strain which the upkeep of these enormous forces placed upon the finances of European states. Rulers were always desperate to raise more and more money to improve their war machines or even simply to keep them going. It is very significant, as we have already noticed, that the immediate origins of the mid-century revolutions, which affected France, England, the United Provinces and the Spanish dominions, lay in the financial demands which the rulers of these territories made upon their subjects in order to pay for the upkeep of military forces. In short, the military revolution of the seventeenth century had profound social, financial and constitutional consequences.

place which transformed the whole scale of seventeenth century warfare. In the sixteenth century, during the long Habsburg—Valois struggle, operations on several fronts were common, but these were not usually planned in a systematic way. During the Thirty Years' War, however, with battles once more fashionable and hostilities ranging over the whole of central Europe, commanders began to look on the whole area of

conflict as a single great theatre of war. Indeed, Gustavus himself planned to combine two types of strategy: offensive operations which were intended to defeat the enemy on the battlefield, and a gradual conquest of Germany by the systematic occupation of the country. His early death prevented any attempt being made to carry out the latter idea, but the grandiose nature of the scheme bears witness to the growing





The shape of the future

A century of dramatic changes; three new great powers in Europe—Britain, Austria and Russia; religion loses its impact in international affairs; economic conflicts become increasingly important; the emergence of modern scientific man.

In 1715 the military, political, economic, religious and intellectual situation in Europe was very different from what it had been a century before. In the political and military spheres France had replaced Spain as the greatest European power. In 1600 the Spanish Empire, with possessions in four continents, was the dominant power. It is true that Philip II had failed to conquer England or to subdue his rebellious subjects in the northern Netherlands, but he passed on to his son Philip III in 1598 a much larger empire than the one which he had inherited from his father, the Emperor Charles V, in the 1550s. The seventeenth century, however, saw a steady reduction in Spanish power, which had been founded essentially

the empire. The rapid economic decline of on the strength of the Castilian heartland of Castile from the early years of the century onwards led to growing financial demands on the periphery which in turn helped to produce the revolts of the 1640s. Soon Portugal was irrecoverably lost and by the last years of the century an impoverished Spain under the rule of a mentally sub-normal king, Charles II, had sunk to the status of a second rate power. In the early years of the eighteenth century, with a Frenchman, Philip V, on the throne, she began to recover some strength, but Spain was never again to be one of the greatest powers in Europe.

The Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659, a

Above: Isaac Newton, the greatest scientist of the seventeenth century. His Principia Mathematica, published in 1687, was one of the supreme intellectual achievements of all time. It drew a picture of the universe which dominated European thought from the early eighteenth century until the work of Einstein in the twentieth. (National Portrait Gallery, London.) On the left: a laboratory for studying sunspots. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

The seventeenth century saw a considerable growth in the use of artillery and in the organisation of professional artillery services. Cannon, however—like that on the right (Musée de Versailles)—were often comparatively primitive. It was only in the eighteenth century that their construction became standardised.

Below right: a page from the great French Encyclopedia of the 1760s showing the making of field guns. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Far right: a French non-commissioned officer. (Musée de l'Armée, Paris.)

landmark in the decline of Spain, also marked the rise of France to the position of the leading power in Europe, a place which she owed mainly to the work of the great cardinals, Richelieu and Mazarin, whose victories against both Austrian and Spanish Habsburgs in the Thirty Years' War strengthened the position of their country abroad, just as their work in domestic affairs laid some of the foundations for Louis XIV's rule at home. By the 1670s France, with by far the best army and diplomatic service in Europe, was also rapidly increasing her economic strength, particularly her industrial potential. It seemed that she was in a position to threaten complete domination of the continent. By 1715 that danger had gone. France remained the most powerful single state, but changes in the international situation from the 1680s onwards, and particularly the growing power of England, which, under William III, was constantly hostile to France, ensured that there was a balance of power in European affairs.

Indeed, the years from 1680 to 1715 saw the emergence of England, Austria and Russia as great powers, able to play very important roles on the eighteenth century European scene. The rise of England in the period 1688 to 1715 is demonstrated by the predominant role she played in the coalition which finally set limits to Louis XIV's ambitions in the war of the Spanish Succession. Britain's armies, under Marlborough, inflicted the first serious defeats on the French military machine which it suffered during Louis' reign, and her navy, as large as the French and Dutch navies combined dominated the seas. This growth in Britain's military and hence in her political power was accompanied by a relative decline in the importance of the United Provinces. William III, after he became king of England in 1689, made it clear that he regarded Britain as the senior partner in the alliance

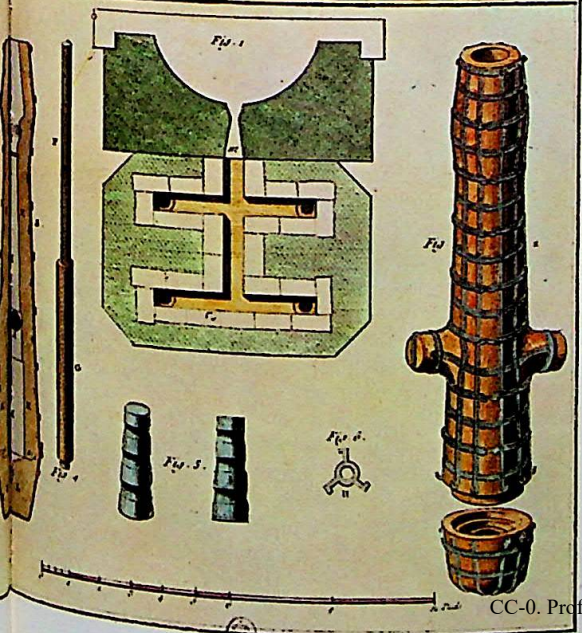
of the two maritime powers, and in 1715 it was already clear to informed observers that the United Provinces had begun that long decline in her political importance which took place during the eighteenth century.

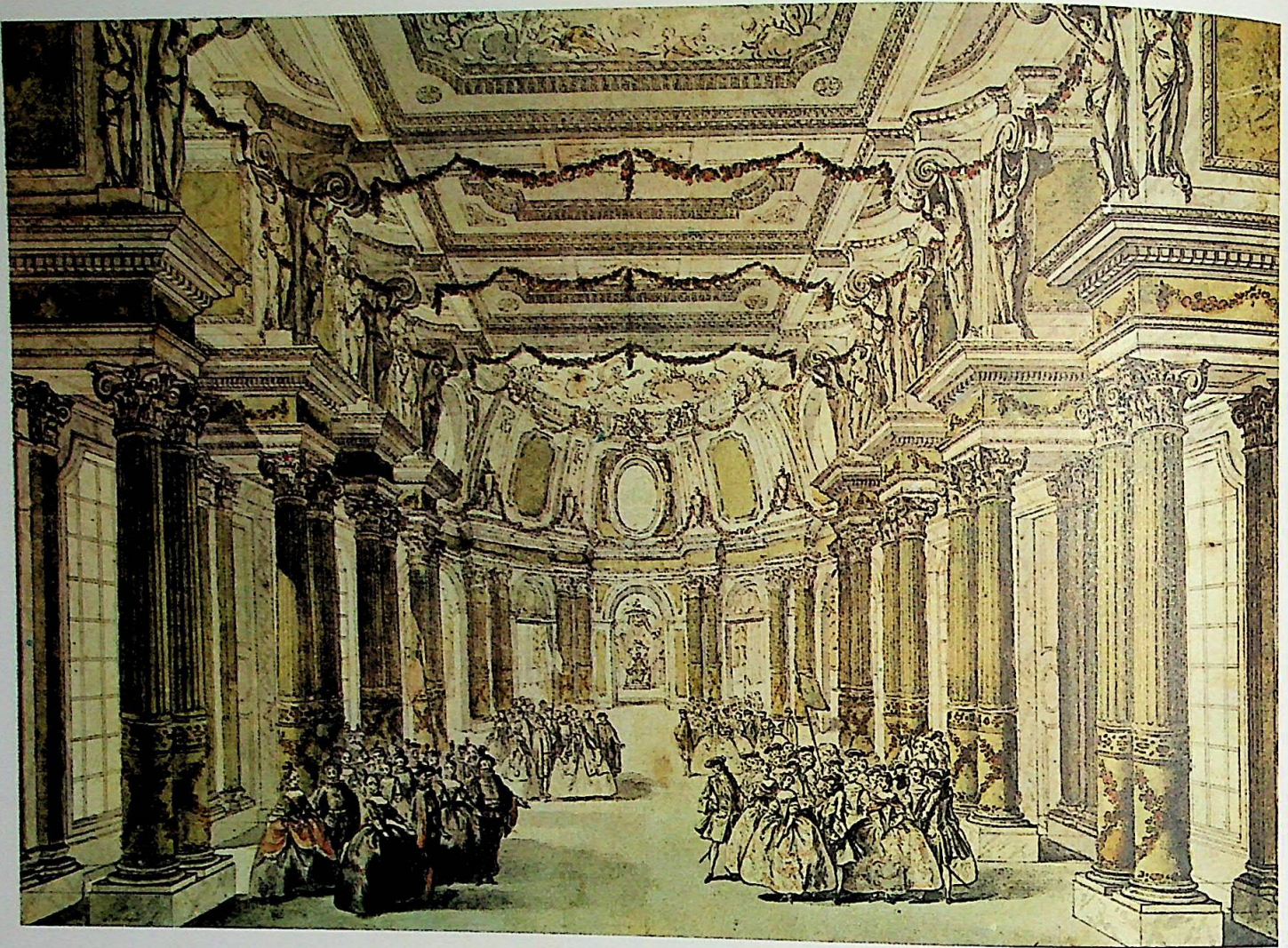
Shifting fortunes

Austria's star, in the later years of the seventeenth century, was, in contrast, in the ascendant. Her great victories over the Turks in the 1680s and 1690s, leading to the reconquest of Hungary, together with the huge possessions which she obtained in Italy and the Netherlands in 1713 made her very clearly a great power in 1715. Russia too, under the enormously energetic rule of Peter the Great, increased her strength by leaps and bounds at the turn of the century. By 1715 and still more by 1721 she had replaced Sweden as the predominant power in northern and north-eastern Europe, where she exercised great influence in the vast but declining Polish state.

Russia's power rested on her large population and vast natural resources, the basic elements in the economic and hence in the potential political power of any country. Actual power, of course, depended on how far governments were able to use the skills and abilities of their people to develop the natural resources of the country in the service of the state. France, with a numerous and relatively skilful population and considerable natural resources, was in 1700 still much more powerful than Russia which had superior resources but a slightly smaller and very much less skilful population. The Ottoman Empire, if one considers its European, Asiatic and African provinces together, had many more people even than France, but its real power was limited by technological backwardness. The United Provinces, in contrast, concealed the disadvantages of a small country and population by exploiting







the very highly developed skills and energies of its people and its natural geographical advantages at the centre of European trade routes to make itself the leading commercial and financial power of the seventeenth century. It was a remarkable achievement, but, in the nature of things, it was bound to be temporary. Once Britain, with a similarly favourable geographical position, a larger population, and greater natural resources began to concentrate more and more efforts on financial and commercial development the days of Holland's supremacy were numbered. In 1715 the United Provinces were still the leading commercial and financial power but they were being rapidly overtaken by Britain.

The last religious war

In the seventeenth century, as the Anglo-Dutch wars showed, economic conflicts played an increasing role in international affairs, a tendency which continued in later years. Religious differences, in contrast, played a less significant part in international relations as the seventeenth century wore on. The Thirty Years' War was the last great

conflict in western and central Europe in which religion played a really important role, though of course the war between Austria and the Ottoman Empire in eastern Europe in the 1680s and 1690s had strong religious overtones. From 1648 onwards, in fact, the religious frontiers of Europe were fixed. After that date, although religion continued to play a very important role in the internal politics of states, as the treatment of the French Huguenots and the career of James II in England showed very clearly, no European country changed its formal religious allegiance.

It was during these years too, however, that traditional religion, whether of the Catholic or Protestant variety, lost its hold over many educated Europeans. This intellectual revolution was preceded, accompanied and largely caused by the great developments in mathematics and science which characterised the seventeenth century and had ramifications throughout the whole field of thought. The intellectual climate among intelligent men was totally different in 1700 from what it had been in 1600. These changes in thought were perhaps the most important of all the developments which

Above: a fête at Versailles. The splendour of the uniforms and dresses which were displayed at such functions combined with the magnificent settings to produce scenes of unparalleled splendour. (Musée de Versailles.)

took place during the period. It is traditional to see the great break in the century as between the 1640s and 1650s, when so many political and social revolutions occurred. In the field of thought, however, the years 1680 to 1720 were crucial. It was in these years that great numbers of intelligent men who had absorbed the rudiments of the seventeenth century scientific advances came to adopt a secular view of life and a sceptical attitude towards traditional authority which betokened a decisive breach with the past. It is perhaps at that time, rather than at any other, that we should place the dividing line between 'medieval' and 'modern' thought. The educated men of 1700 belonged in truth to a 'new Europe': they were the first generation to share a good many of the attitudes of the modern European mind.

THE CIVILISATION OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Events	Arts	Sciences	Literature and philosophy
1600			
Accession of James I (1603)	El Greco: <i>View of Toledo</i> (1605)	Galileo: the telescope	Cervantes: <i>Don Quixote</i>
Assassination of Henry IV	Birth of Rembrandt (1606)	Kepler (1571-1630)	Bacon: <i>Novum Organum</i>
Accession of Louis XIII (1610)	Monteverdi: <i>Orpheus</i>	Harvey: circulation of the blood	Authorised version of the Bible (1611)
Beginning of the Thirty Years' War (1618)	Rubens: <i>Last Judgement</i>	Harvey: working of the heart	Birth of Molière (1622)
			Birth of Pascal (1623)
1630			
Death of Gustavus Adolphus (1632)	Rembrandt: <i>The Anatomy Lesson</i> (1632)	Prosecution of Galileo (1633)	First Folio of Shakespeare published (1623)
Death of Richelieu (1642)	Inigo Jones's plan for Covent Garden Market	Birth of Newton (1642)	Birth of Locke and of Spinoza (1632)
Treaties of Westphalia (1648)	Van Dyck: <i>Portrait of Charles I</i>	Torricelli: the barometer	Donne's collected poems published (1633)
Execution of Charles I (1649)	Velasquez: <i>Crucifixion</i>		Corneille: <i>Le Cid</i> (1636)
			Descartes: <i>Discours sur la Méthode</i> (1637)
Death of Cromwell (1658)	Mansart: <i>Val-de-Grâce</i>	Creation of the Academy of Sciences in Paris (1658)	Birth of Leibnitz (1646)
	Rembrandt: <i>Portrait of the artist</i>		Pascal: <i>Les Provinciales</i> (1656)
1660			
Restoration of Charles II	Rembrandt: <i>The Guild of Drapers</i>	Royal Society founded (1662)	Molière: <i>Tartuffe</i>
Building of Versailles begins	Murillo: Decoration of the hospital of Coridad	Leibnitz: theory of movement (1670)	Milton: <i>Paradise Lost</i> (1667)
			Pascal: <i>Pensées</i> (1670)
Treaty of Nymegen (1679)	Sir Christopher Wren: Greenwich Observatory begun (1676)	Newton: theory of gravity (1682)	Spinoza: <i>Ethics</i>
Death of Colbert (1683)	Birth of Rameau (1683)	Halley's comet (1682)	Bunyan: <i>A Pilgrim's Progress</i> (1678)
	Birth of Watteau (1684)		Leibnitz: <i>Systema Theologicum</i>
	Birth of J. S. Bach and Handel (1685)		Newton: <i>Principia Mathematica</i> (1687)
1690			
William and Mary king and queen of England (1689)	Purcell: <i>Dido and Aeneas</i> (1689)	Huygens: <i>Treatise on Light</i> (1690)	Birth of Voltaire (1694)
Treaty of Ryswyck (1697)	Birth of Chardin (1699)	Newton: <i>Optics</i>	Congreve: <i>The Way of the World</i> (1700)
Death of Louis XIV (1715)	Birth of Boucher (1703)	Papin: experiments with steam	Leibnitz: theory of monads
1720			

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Acknowledgments

9 Freeman; 10 Brompton; 10-11, 11, 12, 13, 14 Above, Freeman; 14 Below, Josse; 15 John Webb; 16 Above, Tweedy; 16 Below, Freeman; 18-19 Maurice Lheureux; 20-1 John Webb; 22 Freeman; 22-3 John Webb; 23 Freeman; 24 Brompton; 33 Above, Josse; 33 Below, Meyer Erwin; 36-7 Below, 40, 44-5, 47, 48-9, 50, 53, 54, 54-5, 56-7, 58, 59, 60-1, 62-3, 64, 65, 66-7, 68, 68-9, 69, 70 Above, Josse; 70 Below, Requet; 71, 74 Josse; 76, 77 Novosti; 80 Josse; 81 Left, 87 Below, 89, 90 Right, 91, 92 Novosti; 93, 94-5, 95, 98, 98-9, 100 Josse; 104 Below, Scala; 106-7, 108, 108-9, 109, 110, 110-11, 111, 112, 113, 114 Josse; 114-15 G. Muller; 116, 117 Below, Josse; 117 Above, G. Muller; 121 Freeman; 122-3 Top, Josse; 123 Abeille; 124 Josse.

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